



**POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR OF THE MUSLIM
MINORITY IN WEST BENGAL :
A CASE STUDY OF MALDA DISTRICT
ABSTRACT**

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN

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BY

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A B S T R A C T

Disequilibrium in the Muslim World in Political affairs was bound to grapple with intellectual minds in the circumference of social sciences. Therefore, one is almost bound to look at some similar phenomena in an area that contains these political phenomena which seem to mould political behaviour of the mass of people in general. In fact, Sahabanchak a panchayat constituency with 10,000 Muslim population and 5,000 Hindu population was that kind of area where those phenomena seemed tremendously operative by reason of so many social and economic factors. The body of phenomenal write-ups, however, witnessed various situations in India and helped hypothesisation for Sahabanchak being the field of present empirical study.

Hypotheses :

The major hypotheses include a number of variables economy, education, religion, politics and to an extent kinship. These variables are interdependent in operation, and that one aspect of man's life and activity indispensably invites other aspects to operate together.

Economic variable, for instance, does not work alone, but is aided by too political, religious, communal, cultural or kinship variables. Similarly, when educational aspect is

in operation, its ultimate function is thoroughly complemented by political, religious, communal, cultural, economic phenomena. Therefore, when political aspect is operative, all other aspects take active part in supplementing its function. Thus, every variable is always complementary to others.

However, these hypotheses naturally gave rise to the following objectives to study ;(1) how one aspect of life appertains to other aspects i.e., ^{how e.g.} economic life is influenced by political, educational, religious cultural, communal, kinship;(2) Low education is influenced by politics, economy, religion, communalism kinship etc. (3) How and what way, political role and status of masses and the political activists are determined, and how it is interrelated with economy, education, religion, culture, communalism and kinship.

Methodology :

This study is mostly based on field data collected on the basis of purposive sampling which undertook 464 Muslim and 64 Hindu respondents and informants. Some data have been procured from the secondary sources. The entire bulk of the primary data, however, was collected with the help of a Schedule, and the entire area has been thoroughly observed.

Sahabanchak is an underdeveloped administrative area with nearly 15,000 population,—10,000 being Muslims, while 5,000 Hindus. Political behaviour of the population is largely influenced

by a large number of Social aspects- which are following :

Economy : Rural economy of Sahabanchak includes agriculture, business organisation, employment, animal husbandry and bidimaking, trading, and manual labour. Agriculture that includes landholding as being status symbol of the whole rural population is still one of the prominent economic aspects. Agricultural organisation, strictly after 1969, involves too much politics. Land Reforms Act of 1956 made the people aware of their rights. Bargadari system is brought into force which brings about immense tension and sporadic bloody confrontation between landowner and bargadar where political interference is made on the basis of political affiliation of the disputants, their kinship, religious and socio-economic status, on the whole. Even personal grudge is satisfied by means of applying tenancy rights on somebody's land.

Similarly, business organisation is also based on political, religious, communal grounds. Political ruling party raises party funds from the business firms, on one hand, and votebanks on the other. But it fails to provide security to life and property of the Muslim businessmen at the Baishnabnagar market who severely feel threatened by the increasingly growing reactionary forces being trained at the nearby places by the RSS. As a result, Muslims as a whole began to tilt towards some Muslim communal political party, like Muslim League.

Occupation of the market shops by the Muslims creates tension and communal disharmony. Hindu grabbed some portions of the

market yard in the name of leas and temple site. Which are proved to be illegal. Discussions held by the political leaders, local Hindus and the members of the Market Samitee on the matter took place several times but all proved futile. Portions of land could not be restored to the market Samitee, but the dispute resulted in communalisation of the issue, and RSS Camp activists became more active in anti-Muslim Slogans. The local Hindu Communal leaders started persuading the Hindu landlords of the rented buildings to evacuate the Muslim businessmen, but failed. The tension grew more and more, and there took place several altercations on petty issues in the market between different Hindus and Muslims retailers .

Need and greed for employment leads to demoralisation, on one hand, and political exploitation on the other. Educated youth do all party (obviously ruling) works in anticipation of a job. This involves bribes, raising party funds, supply of call girls etc. Here also distribution of jobs is done on communal-cultural or political identities.

Animal husbandry is another avenue of economic life in Sahabanchak. Raising of cattle serves a number of purposes besides drawing plough and carts. But cattle-raising is not in a flourishing state because of certain reasons. Increasingly price-hikes of cattle ^{by} caused/theft of cattle at nights, a huge exodus of Indian cattle to Bangladesh, communal hindrances of the RSS trainees through camp slogans every now and then, are some of the major reasons for languishing state of this avenue. Therefore, agricultural Muslim

households can not raise a larger number of cattle than they need for agricultural tasks.

Bidi-making is at present regarded as on the most basic domestic chores in most of the households in Sahabanchak. Bidi-making requires less labour and pays more than agricultural work does, and thus the agricultural workforce has been gradually reducing in this area. However, all these largely contribute to Muslim political action and feelings.

Education : Education life in Sahabanchak is dull and frustrating, indeed. Larger number of the respondents and informants are illiterate, and never feel any need of it except its importance in raising socio-economic status. Low education or deep ignorance, as they claimed, involves a number of reasons. Lack of education does not prevent people from political, economic, socio-cultural or other enterprises, on the one hand. On the other, severe difficulty in admissions, unnecessary political interference, socio-economic status, lack of minority institutions and girls' schools, enactment of Government policy about establishing new institutions by means of organisation, conversion ^{of} Muslim institutions to secular institutions, cultural threats from the communal and anti-muslim reactionary quarters, like RSS, and others largely contribute to Muslims' suffering from ignorance and unenlightenment in the field of educational achievements.

Political leaders, like, Jyoti Basu, Kamal Basu, Jotin Chakhorborty, Mansoor Habibullah Rajib Gandhi and all others, and many academicians,

lawyers and writers try to take political and communal advantage of the Muslim ignorance and therefore never care to ameliorate their backward state in education and learning. So-called ullama are also a sound contributor to this state. However, all those facts and factors which the Muslim Community holds responsible for their educational lag behind its counterpart duly mould political behaviour of the Muslims in Sahabanchak.

Religion : Religious interference with political activities of the Sahabanchak people is one of the major causes of Muslim political participation. Yet Muslims are not so staunch in matters of religious performance. Their religious performance sometimes widely differs from the Law of God in matters of sacrificing on the occasion of Eid-el-Azha, Fitra on Eid-el-fitr, Zakat, ushr etc. One who fails to give fitrah or zshet or ushr takes huge share in Qurbani in order to obtain huge flesh. Distributions of Qurbani flesh does also violates Islamic Law.

Economic life of Sahabanchak involves extreme jealousy among business firms situated at Baishnabnagar market, altercation in land holding and cultivating, bloody confrontation between bargadar and landowner and invites tension and disharmony. In most of the affairs politics is involved and therefore it leads on the various disputes, exploitation, discrimination by political leaders on grounds of religion, kinship, socio-economic status and others. In fact their affairs go against the law of God, but contribute to the

moulding of the political attitudes. Similarly Muslim education suffers from lack of religious and cultural aspects of Islam, absence of giant Muslim literateurs from the course, presence of Hindu mythology, illogical fatwa of the money-making ulema, and general mass-ignorance. On the other hand, political leaders, like, Joty Basu, Jotin Chakroborty, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and others, growing adherence to Hinduism and indifference to Aleya Madrassah and Communal massacre of the Muslims etc gave rise to educational insecurity in the Muslim community. Muslim education also suffers from women illiteracy . As a result, women are not given equal status, and are placed (not forced so much) to do most of the domestic works irrespective of female works. Even she does not seek her equal share in food and drinks. However, this woman condition propels another point of violation of the Law of God.

At present, the Muslims are in the grip of threat to their religion and culture, because of huge organisation of RSS in several parts of the State and around Sahabanchak. Anti national rather anti-Muslim Slogans at all the training Camps organised are not cowed down by any efforts of the state and central governments at all. On the contrary, the top most political leaders from both CPI(M) and Congress (I) occasionally joined hands with several communal organisations, like, RSS, Ram Krishna Mission and else. Thus the Muslim community as a whole feel that there religion and culture is in danger, and therefore, the Muslims assume their political role in view of the situation by tilting towards the Muslim League.

Politics : Muslims of Sahabanchek confine their political participation largely to the local panchayat politics and to a lesser extent to the national level. Local level politics is almost based on cash-bribe when both the voter and the candidate are from the same religion, and to an extent when both of them on kinship terms. Since bribe is more effective instrument, general masses are easily convinced to change their political ideology, and unhesitatingly accept money which is always fixed on bargain. Many of the voters accept money from more than one party, and vote for the candidate after his own choice. But one thing is sure that after all voters vote for a candidate who belongs to his own religious faith, in most cases. This is so because rural leadership is not at all effective. There exist three types of leadership in Sahabanchek but they are either exploitative or impotent including the Muslim leaders. When the Muslim masses for instance, faced inhuman massacre at the Katra masjid, Muslim leader, say, Mansoor Habibullah utters immense plaudit on the thought and mantra of the Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) who was not^{at} all favourable to the Muslim community. Fact lies that such leaders who are present in large number in both the major parties of West Bengal, CPI(M) and Congress (I) won on Muslim vote banks, and want to show themselves as true secular personalities.

In fact, the Muslim masses are mobilised on the religious grounds. Therefore, they hold the Congress (I) Government responsible for the incidence of communal riots throughout the country,

Shabano case judgement, Ramjanambhoomi- Babri Masjid issue, and voted in bloc for the C.P.I.(M) in the last elections, though they still dislike CPI(M)'s relation with certain communal parties like BJP whose prominent leaders like A.B.Bajpayee, L.K.Advani etc have acquired membership of the RSS. Besides voting, the Muslims also try to raise party funds from various employees, businessmen, agriculturists and so on . Thus, it creates a political economy in rural society of Sahabanchak and nurtishes the Panchayat institution.

Panchayat, which was introduced as a medium of decentralisation of political power, on one hand, and a means of rural development and reconstruction on the other, practically plays an economic role , by any standard. Panchayat is usually trusted with lots of funds for all rural public works. But the funds are never utilised at proper places, but are wholly grabbed by its members themselves allowing some share to a few influential people who appear as a threat to their mischiefs. As a result, public works, such as brick -roads, repair of kuccha roads, roadside waiting room, lavatory , tube well, and all others, are not done in usual course.

Apart from this, rural education tremendously suffers from defective education system which is resented. But the Government manned by Hindus and atheists are busy in Coaxing Hindu masses by means of disheartening the Muslim sentiment. This is another way that how education system is politicised. This gives rise to another phenomenon that how muslim ignorance and illiteracy is intensified

in the hands of political men with a view to keeping intact and secure their gaddi with the help of the Hindu votes. All this, however, makes, day by day, the Muslims aware of the actual political and social situations and enables them to chalk out their own line of action in the political arena. But what actually happens is that the masses are played like "the pawnson the chess-board" by the power-starved leaders. There have found a number of examples of this kind which ultimately proved that even the so-called leaders are not at all committed to any political ideology whether it is Marxism or Gandhism or whatever.

Conclusion :

However this study can be concluded by saying that all the aspects of human life are involved in most of the social organisations which ultimately mould political behaviour of the Muslims of Sahabanchak. Therefore, it is seen that there is the involvement of politics, religion, culture, communalism, Kinship in most of the economic pursuits of men. At the same time, it has become obvious that education life of people is also closely attached to economy polity, culture, religion, communalism , kinship etc. according to which man puts his political action. Similar is the case with religious and cultural life of man. Facts and field data reveal that the issue is rather communal than purely religious, and that is why all th types of actions of men-economic, educational, political and to extent religious itself-are performed by the Muslims just in defiance of Islamic jurisprudence or the Law of God.

On the other hand, coming to political life of the Muslim people, it has come to light that their political action is strictly equipped with certain economic expectations and religious cultural security and not by any national welfare motive. As a result, they often become exploited by the winning political giants at all levels and on all counts. But the fact shows that such leaders are also committed to personal gains and aspirations (gaddi of power) and are not at all imbued with any political ideology.



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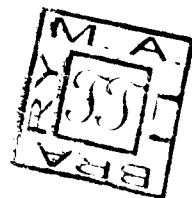
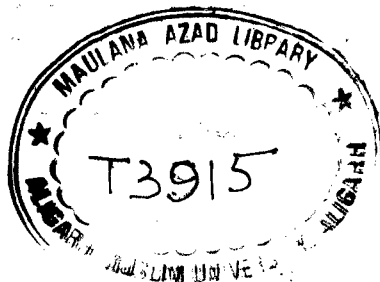
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Doctoral Thesis on
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A CASE STUDY OF MALDA DISTRICT" submitted by Mr. Mohammad-
Sikh Nabi in the fulfilment of his Doctor of philosophy
is his original contribution. He has completed his work
under my supervision.

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PREFACE

My local acquaintance and linguistic advantage with the area I undertook for the present empirical study known as Sahabanchak proved many ways useful to me. Accompanied by study of some literature broadly on political behaviour this fact enabled me to formulate a number of major hypotheses and objectives which ^{are} given in the following manners.

Hypotheses :

1. Political role of Sahabanchak Muslims is being deeply influenced by a number of social factors, such as economic, educational, religious, cultural or other factors.
2. Every factor that contributes to moulding the Muslims' political behaviour is a intermingling one being complementary to other factors in their obvious operations.
3. The extent to which politicisation and personal loyalty does exploit its subjects is higher than the extent to which the people achieve their political status through political role play.
4. And, thus the overall political achievements by people may be reckoned as lower than their economic achievements through political processes, on the whole.

Objectives :

The foregoing hypotheses were formulated to study:(a)whether Muslims economic organisation appertains to politics or politicisation, communalism or other social walks of life, such as

education, kinship, cultural change and so on ; (b) whether their educational life is somehow connected with prevailing phenomena, such as economic life, political change religious and cultural organisation, and so forth ; (c) whether their religious and cultural rites and rituals are somehow influenced by, and /or do influence, other prevailing phenomena , such as economic organisation, educational system, political organisation, and so on; (d) and, if the people, in general and in particular, are satisfied with the operating polity, and are away from exploitative processes, politicisation and personal loyalty to the so-called politicians.

Research activity, of any kind and at any length, is quite unknown to Sahabanchek, though there have been lot of aspects in human activity of pre-and post-independence India which looked to me suitable for research. By reason of this sheer absence^{of} research activities , there exists no piece of literature based on research of any kind. The present study is the result of it, and shall be the only literature of research findings on the political behaviour of the Muslim community of Sahabanchek.

Whatever literature appears on political behaviour of people in Indian polity fails to grapple with the roots and branches inherent in their political behaviour of Sahabanchek, and to some extent, harps on the same strings and follows the Stereotypes.

As a result, such pieces of literature do not fit the recurring political phenomena, as they have already assumed severe complications and complications with the change of social situations. Therefore, a single issue-for example, Babri Masjid-shall not necessarily have the same impact upon Muslim minds throughout the Muslim world. But an issue regarded^{as} the least sensitive must have immense impact on individuals, only when other factors are entangled with the individuals,^{and will} flare up riotous uprisings hither and thither. So to speak most of the indicators of people's political behaviour are not the independent variables, but are interdependent ones - one must locate throughout the present study. However this study has been put forth in seven Chapters each of which deals with different aspects of political behaviour of the Sahabanchak Muslim community in the following manners.

The first Chapter deals with various behavioural studies conducted at various places of India : on the basis of these studies, the present empirical study has been sought to formulate its hypotheses and major objectives.

The second chapter deals with research field, its situation and various methods and techniques for gathering primary data.

The third chapter deals with people's economic organisation and shows how it is inseparably related with other various factors such as education, religion, communalism politics etc.

The fourth chapter deals with peoples educational organisation which is shown to be interrelated with economic factor, political factor, communalism, culture etc. The fifth chapter relates to peoples' religious organisation which is interdependent among economic, cultural, political and communal factors.

The sixth chapter deals with various prominent political phenomena and factors and shows their interdependent variables such as economic, religious cultural, educational and politicising factors. The concluding chapter underlines the major findings and summarises them.

Such intermingling variables and their functions would have not been obvious in the study to this extent, had not this study been supplemented by primary data collection of which was made possible by a number persons. They also remained benign and cooperative to me in every step I took to make progress in the study, on the whole. Most highly worthnaming are Dr. M.B. Mathur, Reader, Deptt. of Sociology, A.M.U., (Research Supervisor), Dr. Mrs. S.B. Ahmad and Dr. J. Ferooqui, Readers, Deptt. of Sociology, A.M.U.,

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University of Delhi, Prof. I. Habib, Deptt of History, A.M.U. Aligarh
Prof. Abdul Aziz, Chairman, Deptt. of Geography, A.M.U., Prof, Ms. .
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Aligarh. Above all, I am morally Committed to the obligation by the
Institute of Objective Studies, Sir Syed Nagar, Aligarh and
Prof. Sayed H. Ahmad, Deptt. of Political Science, A.M.U. Aligarh.

M. S. Nabi
(Mohammad Sish Nabi)
21. 12. 1989

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem :

Beginning of the present century has been marked by excitement among the world Muslims numbering about one-sixth of the world's population. This gave rise to a state of disequilibrium in the post colonial third world countries, like India on several counts- social, cultural intellectual above all political. In almost all contemporary Muslim societies, the traditional class of Ulama tenaciously clings to the ideas and notions enshrined in medieval Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and has in general allied itself with those social classes which are embedded in the social systems of feudalism and capitalism. However feudalism as a social relationship is being replaced by a higher social system: industrial capitalism, a pluralistic society and parliamentary democracy. This relatively new democratic and Scientific culture is associated with the rise of social and natural sciences as well as with an increase in social and political consciousness of the masses. Such social and political consciousness put the Muslim community into a

rather complex whole divisible into social substructures. As a result, the Muslims together with other communities exhorted, through various political and socio-cultural activities, assertion for power, prestige and wealth in highly competitive political arena.

As regards highly competitive political arena hankering after power, wealth and prestige, any country of the world can hardly match India. As a sociological concept, power occupies a very basic and central place in the study of dynamics of social systems. From one point of view, all processes of social change, social crisis or equilibrium and disequilibrium of society can be interpreted and analysed with reference to and within the matrix of changing structure of power.¹ However, the sociological approach to power analysis emerges from the assessment of its functional role as a perpetuative and cohesive element of social structural configuration. It is treated not only as identical to a political system but also as the integrative principle of social structure and stratification. Its sociological analysis, therefore includes the whole gamut of the interacting personal, social historical and economic forces of society which result into mode of social relationship of 'subordination and subordination or of 'Control of interests and structure of people controlled and controlling the power personnel.²

The power that leads ultimately to acquisition of wealth and prestige is the primary aim of political participation. Political participation requires energy-political knowledge or base and support come in as the secondary requirements. Jagdish Chandra Kapur³ writes, In the last two decades energy has become the single most important instrument for exercise of political and economic power. The protection, exploitation and trade in energy has led to the emergence of many regional and international power centres and spheres of influence in one form or other.

However, power is exercised within a socio-economic system through control, manipulation or neutralisation of the instruments of power centres. Although power is exercised for a variety of purposes basic motivations swing between the ideals of world peace, national pride and growth, on one side, and economic gains, quite often, the naked preemption of political and economic power and self-defence, on the other. Their obvious appearances are not far to seek. There has appeared a large body of literature of different times and of various places of India; it demonstrates different means and ways which are often exploited by political men in

order to achieve their aims relating to power and wealth. As a result, various social scientists have come up and put forth certain facts about political means and ways and consequences and achievements in black and white.

For example, Morris-Jones⁴, a foreign researcher, has put the Indian political language under three main pillars in which all political phenomena are termed. Morris-Jones feels that every state's political life has an inside story and every 'honest' book on politics has to try to bring it out, and therefore, he has rightly taken up the job in Indian political context. However, he brought out a poor set of labels' (which he himself considers) consisting of 'modern', 'traditional' and 'saintly', and described separately these terms in some length.

The language of modern politics is undoubtedly important in India- more so than perhaps in most other parts of Asia. This is less on account of the long period of British rule- than because of the existence for nearly one hundred years of an Indian elite steeped in its grammar and masters of its accents. Members of this elite were not only the agents of much of the administrative and economic development of the country; they also provided the leadership of some of the more important movements of social

reform and nationalist movement itself. It is true that an important change came over the nationalist movement with the impact of Gandhi's leadership after 1917, but it would be a mistake to imagine that Gandhi did not employ the modern idiom ; he combined it with another, but by no means abandoned it or prevented its continuous development.

This language is so widespread in India that it has seemed possible to give a well nigh comprehensive account of Indian political life without moving outside its terms. That indeed is what the political Scientists have been doing. It has been found that so much modern behaviour and so much modern talk about the behaviour that has hardly been found that their own language comes deficient. This modern language of politics the language of the Indian Constitution and the Courts ; of parliamentary debate, of the higher administration; of the upper levels of all the main political parties , of the entire English press and much of the Indian languages press. It is language which speaks of politics and interests, programmes and plans. It expresses itself in arguments and representations, in discussions and demonstrations, deliberations and decisions.

Indian politics is in part conducted in a very different language. The traditional idiom is that which

social anthropologists and sociologists in India are very busy discovering and rediscovering for us of the present time. In its purest forms it is spoken in rural India. It knows little or nothing of the problems of anything as big as India and its vocabulary scarcely includes policies and plans. One way of indicating how different it is would be to use the term 'feudal', for this word, although in some ways misleading and inexact, would at least put us at an appropriate distance from the first idiom. 'Tribal' might also do the trick and would not be without some justification.

This language of policies is that of particular kind of highly developed status society. It is far more important as a measure of behaviour than it is spoken about. It is the chief source of contrast between the inside and outside stories of Indian politics, even of the gap between practice and profession which is a striking feature of Indian life.

Caste (or subcaste or 'Community') is the core of traditional politics. To it brings a complete social ethos. It embraces all and is all-embracing. Every man is born in a particular communal or caste group and

with it inherits a place and a station in society from which his whole behaviour and outlook may be said, in idea at least, to be derived : his occupation, the range from which his parents will choose to negotiate for his bride, his family precise standing in terms of privileges and obligations to members of his own and other caste groups, his attitudes towards them. For this reason caste can not be easily assimilated within the world of modern politics. It is seldom merely a group operating as a unit within a modern whole- as perhaps the Roman Catholics in Australian politics or the Irish in parts of earlier U.S. politics. When it comes into politics it comes not with a list of demands but with a way ^{of} life. The presence of organised caste pressures within Indian political life is itself a sign of the changing of traditional India, this is behaviour unbecoming to units of a status society. It is easy for the modern eye to see caste as a recalcitrant and limited focus of loyalty in stubborn competition with the caste'. But this tends to overlook the rather difficult role of caste in the proper setting of its own society. It contributes to social cohesion, it organises the parts into the maintenance of a whole local community, the village.

Although caste and its role have been under slow erosion- by improvements in communications and education - for a hundred years, their massive importance

was only slightly touched. But the impact of caste on political life was restrained, first by the presence of alien rules, second by the movement of nationalism, above all by the fact that even after Gandhi's arrival so much of the initiating, positive politics of India belonged to a fairly restricted elite. Now this has changed. From the traditional society, itself changing, caste moves out into politics. At the same time, mass politics means new political invasions of traditional society. To these new encounters caste brings as a part of its way of life certain attitudes of special relevance to politics. Of these central one concerns the nature of political authority. In a traditional idiom political authority is of course an extension of certain general status, it has its natural, substantially hereditary seats. In most regions of India there appears to be a particular local caste which is 'dominant'. In each village within the region the natural repositories of authority will be men of certain families within that caste. Economic status seems to have some, rather variable, part to play in this matter of dominance. Other castes will have their own leaders but they will be no more than spokesmen for partial groups. The political leadership of the whole little community will be provided by those who have this task as one of their recognized functions,

part of the contribution they are expected to do render to the system of carefully graded privileges and obligations which they uphold and which upholds them. Political authority is thus taken as naturally determined and given, not a question of choice, election and wills.

The third language of saintly politics is to be found at the margin of Indian politics. By this, it is meant that it is in some quantitative sense relatively unimportant, spoken only by a few and occupying a definitely subsidiary place on the political page. Saintly politics is important as a language of comment rather than of description or political behaviour. The out-standing figure of nation-wide importance in this idiom is Vinoba Bhave, the 'Saint on the march' who tours India on foot preaching the path of self-sacrifice and love and polity without power. His effective^{and} active followers may not be many but his activities and pronouncements are reported weak, and almost day by day in the press. The direct impact of Bhave is a matter of some concertainty and dispute. The startling initial success of his call for donations of land for distribution to the landless prompted all political parties to pay tribute to him and accord him respectful recognition. Subsequently doubts about the motives of landdonors and a certain ineffectiveness in the distribution have lowered the temperature of enthusiasm.

More recently, there has taken place the experiment of taking Bhave's help in dealing with the decoit menace in the region south of Delhi; police action was taken off while Bhave went in to talk to the brigand gang leaders, the present impression is that the decoits were keen to benefit more from the withdrawal of police attention than from the message of Bhave.

But the direct effect of Bhave is less important than the indirect. This language has a widespread appeal to all sections in India. For many people it is identified with the political style of Gandhi. This is bad oversemplification : for one thing this was only one of Gandhi's styles ; for another, this idiom was already present in Indian society before Gandhi undertook its systematic and organized development. The influence of saintly politics cannot be ignored. Admittedly, it affects men's actual behaviour very little, remarkably few men engaged in political activity within the other two idioms are striving to be saintly. Its influence is rather on the standards habitually used by people at large for judging the performance of politicians. In men's minds there is an ideal of disinterested selflessness by contrast with which almost all normal conduct can seem very shabby.

It contributes powerfully to several very prevalent attitudes to be found in Indian political life.

After discussing thoroughly the inner and covert as well as outer and overt political phenomena prevailing in India, Morris-Jones, however, dared to show important issues which were involving severe corruptions, so to speak insignificant success of Indian democracy. For this insignificant success or considerable failure of Indian democracy, he held, first of all, responsible the lack of educated middle-class. He feels that the central problem is that suitable channels for political action seem to be fewer than the demand for them. India is an underdeveloped polity from the point of view of the needs^{of} education among people belonging to middle class. It is shaped like a narrow pole rather than a solid pyramid. It is not exactly that there are no organizations and associations at a convenient level, but rather that most these are talking the wrong language. There are plenty of caste organizations, but few lively professional bodies or opinion-propagating societies. It may be that the middle class feeling of working to 'participate' is abnormally developed (a hang over from the national movement which all were excitingly employed, a sign of lack of absorption in

their own jobs, a genuine misunderstanding of the meaning of democracy some of these things and no doubt more), but there is certainly no room on the narrow pole for all who seem to want a place there.

The structure of 'modern' political institutions is not only frustratingly narrow-limited to legislatures and parties. There is also the difficulty that that structure is itself dominated by one organization, the Congress party. And there is very little that the middle classes can do about this in the short run. They might organize other parties, and indeed have of course done so. In the world of traditional politics, governments are changed or chosen so much as used or evaded. The circle is most vicious one. It is interesting to reflect that nothing but adult franchise could have secured Congress rule with such certain stability; a more restricted franchise would have meant the conduct of politics in much more purely modern terms and that would have permitted a much greater 'openness of texture' and flexibility.

Thus the vital educated middle classes are politically quite frustrated. They have no liking or trust or confidence in Congress, but they can not budge because the levers are not in their hands. So the modern opposition remains puny, the traditional opposition

works in other ways , and the student masses become a shade more cynical and despairing as each year passes. Of course, a dozen years of stable government in the wake of independence and partition is no mean blessing, as every administrator in India knows. Yet the disadvantages are now becoming substantial.(P-154)

Unlike Morris-Jones, C. Von Furer-Haimendorf⁵ (1963) holds that caste is a crucial part of Indian political life. Though the politically conscious middle class whose leading members had been educated in European Schools and Universities wanted not to return with indigenous forms of governments but with the establishment of those institutions which they considered essential features of a modern democracy, yet others, who were aware of the inconsistency, evinced a certain lack of realism in assuming that with the coming of freedom and democracy caste loyalties and discrimination based on caste would soon lose all importance as political forces. For this reason or the other, there prevails systems of government conceived and developed in the west, and basically consistent with the traditional indigenous social order, which Furer-Haimendorf looks into full account in his writing.

The introduction of universal franchise abolition of untouchability, legalization of inter caste marriages and the removal of legal discrimination against women, are

all measures inspired by ideals derived from western social thinking. Yet in most cases, the government policy and popular social consciousness are still widely out of step.

Parliamentary democracy and the system of political parties competing for the support of the electorate developed in a society where the individual was not born into a tightly organized group which demands his loyalty and affords him support in his dealing with the rest of the community. Such groups the castes and subcastes- dominate, in India, social life, and inevitably influence their members' attitude to their groupings of a social or political character. In other words, the very fact that a caste is capable of functioning as an effective pressure group, and that its members cannot leave it and join another group at will places it into a position of a political power, which cannot be ignored by the political parties depending for their mandate on the goodwill of the voters. This has been clearly recognized by M.N. Srinivas, in the Report of the Seminar on Casteism and Removal of Untouchability published in 1955. And he believes that no explanation of provincial election- whether involving Rightists or Leftists in any part of India is possible without reference to caste (Srinivas-133) .

In the same report Srinivas pointed out that caste had gained in political importance already during

the days of British rule. The earlier feudal political system had erected many barriers between one chiefdom and other, and this political fragmentation had the effect of preventing the horizontal spread of caste solidarity beyond the individual small state. One example must suffice, the Chitrapur Saraswal Brahmins, a wealthy caste of Bombay, issue their own caste census and directory, according to which there were in 1955 no less than 22 caste-operated educational institutions, 13 fraternal and social agencies and 12 housing co-operations all serving a community of just under 19,000 persons.

Caste consciousness and a sense of strength and importance among the members of the larger castes have been fostered also by the decennial returns of Census India. References to this phenomenon are found in many of the census reports. Thus we find as early as 1911 in the Madras volume the sentence, the last few years, and especially the occasion of the present census, have witnessed an extraordinary revival of the caste spirit in certain aspects.

However, it is particularly the so-called 'dominant' castes which have emerged as the focal points

of political power, and it has been analysed that the shift of importance from numerically small castes of higher ritual status and tradition of literacy and learning, which enabled them to benefit most from western education, to numerically stronger castes of great economic power, which nowadays dominate village affairs and through the voting power of their members make their influence felt right up to the cabinet of states.

The way in which caste-feeling and caste discipline affect political relations and specifically the conduct of the major political parties can best be demonstrated with the help^{of} a concrete example. The most illuminating example is the growth and development of the communist party in Andhra Pradesh. In view of the Communists avowed commitment to the ideal of a secular society free of all distinctions of caste and class the importance of caste solidarity for the success of the Andhra Communists is particularly significant. Selig S. Harrison's study traces the fortunes of the Andhra Communist party in considerable detail (Caste and Andhra Communists (1956): The most Dangerous Decades (1930), pp. 204-45). Even since it was founded in 1934, the leadership was in the hands of the Kamma Caste, which dominates the Krishna Godavari delta. The Kammes are a caste of prosperous farmers, who are said to own about 80 per cent fertile delta land. Their caste

status is that of 'clean' Sudras, and approximately equals that of the other main Telugu cultivating castes of Kappu and Reddy. The Kammes, like the Reddies, pride themselves on the tradition of having been warriors in the armies of the Andhra Kings, and they tend to claim Kshatriya status, though this claim is not admitted by the higher castes.

Selig Harrison attributes the Kammes' political development largely to educational difference (who are having little ambition of western type education- in 1921 newly 30 per cent literate Telugu Brahmans new English, only just over 3 per cent of the literate Kammes were also literate in English) Whereas the Brahmans became the natural leaders of Andhra Congress, the Kammes became in the anti-Brahman movement. Due to this caste antagonism they were ready to support another political party, and natural opponent to the Congress happened to be the Communist Party. (p.59).

Reddies, on the other hand, concentrated in the politically less active districts of the Rayalaseema hinterland showed less inclination to join the communist party. Its leadership was already monopolised by Kammes from the delta and as they were making their entry to party politics in any case belatedly, the Reddies found that there was little to choose between joining the communist Kammes or the Congress Brahmans in the role of junior

partners . It was by accident rather than owing to basic social causes that they assumed the role of non-brahman supporters of Congress, a role which was to prove increasingly profitable when, with the introduction of universal adult suffrage, congress had to adjust its leadership so as to appeal to the great masses of non-Brahman voters.

It may look paradoxical that a caste of wealthy landowners should provide the leadership as well as a great part of the electoral support of a communist party. But the issue before the young Kamma intellectuals, who in 1934 had founded that party, were not those of international Communism, but local issues such as anti-Brahman feeling or - in later years- intense Telugu patriotism agitating for an Andhra State in the face of Congress opposition. True, the Andhra Communists wooed from the very beginning the landless labour which consisted mainly of such untouchable castes as Maler and Madigas, but as late as the election of 1946 franchise limitations excluded most of landless farm labourers from the effective electorate, and the party had no choice than to rely mainly on Kamma voting strength. At the time of elections in 1951. Kammars were so firmly entrenched in Communist leadership, that there was no question of any change of party alignment in terms of caste. Of the successful candidates fourteen were Kammars, two Reddies, three Brahmans and six members of other castes. (p-60).

By that time the Kamme landlords had reaped some of the fruits of their support of the communists. In the Communist rebellion of 1949-50, which extended over the Telangana districts of Hyderabad and large parts of the delta most wealthy Kammas remained unharmed, for party strategy had laid down that as long as such farmers remained aloof from the fight, they should be classified as 'neutralized' and left unbolested. In a report to the Indian Communist Politbureau, of 1948, the Andhra Communists had explicitly declared. Propaganda should be carried on to convince the ryots (landowners) about the just demands of the workers, and we should also effect compromises with such of those ryots who would follow with us. Assurance should be given that we should not touch the lands of rich ryots.

However , after 1951, the rivalry between Congress and Communists took largely the form of a tussle between Kammas and Reddies. What agitated the popular imagination was not a conflict between Commission and Congress ideology, but the conflict between the interests of a Reddi-dominated congress favouring the Selection of Karnool in Rayalaseema as the State capital, and those of the Kammas who championed the claims of the delta.

One of the many paradoxes of the situation was , moreover, that the Communists were not only the spokesmen

of the local patriotism of the delta communities, but were representing also the interests of big businessmen and real estate. At this point, B. Pattabhi Sitarameya, a prominent Andhra Congress leader, writes in symposium on 'Group Prejudices in India': "All patriotism works in concentric circles. The man in power is apt in general to think of his family, relations and people of his sect or group, village tehsil and province' Ed. Sri Manilal B. Nanevati and C.N. Vakil, Bombay 1955, (p.160).

Writing in the same symposium on 'Group prejudices and Political parties' Asoka Mehta, the Socialist leader, puts the same idea even bluntly : 'As the franchise is widened, each social group and sub-group within the generally immobile Hindu Society Struggles for predominance or at least a share in the loaves and fishes of offices and jobs'.

Even the struggle between the Communist party and the Congress and its allies in Kerala can be seen as a conflict of caste-interests, and such an interpretation finds expression in a letter to the Editor of the Economic Weekly, which draws attention to the 'deep conflict between the Nairs and Ezhavas'. 'Nairs and Namboodiris are by and large landowners while the Ezhavas and Harijans,

like Pulayans and Cherumans, are landless labourers. The first group by and large support the Congress and P.S.P. while second the communists. A big bone of contention is the Backward Class reservation provisions which benefit Ezhavas, etc. but not Naivas. M. Padmabhan wants the reservation to go while the Ezhavas donot want it to go, naturally.

As Selig. S. Harrison pointed out in his 'India: The Most Dangerous Decades), caste-divisions make it impossible for Communists to follow traditional Marxist class preconceptions. Where there are two rival castes of approximately equal economic status, the Communists or any other political party must choose between them as it may be impracticable to combine both in the same organisation. Thus in Uttar Pradesh the Communist- led Kisan Sabha is supported by the Jats, and this means that the Chauhans had to be forfeited to Congress, while the untouchables remain uncommitted in order to be able to sell their support to the highest bidder.

Political scientists writing on India seem to base their attitude also on the unproven assumption that Asian politicians who talk in such Western terms as 'democracy, capitalism, socialism or communism' must be motivated by sentiments comparable to those of Western

parliamentarians, and will therefore automatically move away from traditional attitudes. The few field studies which have so far been made do not bear out such an assumption and the present position is succinctly expressed in the following quotation from an article by Maureen L.P. Patterson in the Economic Weekly Annual of January 1958:

It must be emphasized that a high level of western education, considerable contact with westerns, and much travel abroad, do not automatically imply a permissive, liberal attitude towards marriage, diet, caste and social customs..... Among the highly educated persons of all castes whom I met in Maharashtra, many of those who were apparently thoroughly imbued with western ideas did not allow such intellectual westernization to change their personal mode of living..... Caste in Maharashtra has not been upset, undermined, or even much modified in its essentials, during the present period of socio-economic and political change in India as a whole.

Susheela Kaushik : Elections in India- Its Social Basis ; K.P. Bagchi & Co., Calcutta 1982. In addition to Furer-Hemendorf's views on some social issue, Susheela Kaushik⁶ holds that the most fundamental reality of Indian society is the overwhelming poverty. Nearly 50 per cent of

urban population and about 40 per cent rural population lived below the poverty line in 1960-61. A more recent report, the Draft Five Year Plan, 1973-83, puts the corresponding figures for 1977-78 at 48 per cent in the rural and 41 per cent in the urban areas. This actually works out as about 290 millions Indians living below the minimum acceptable levels of living, nearly 130 millions of them leading a near-animal existence and forming the rock bottom of India's economic structure.

A quick glance at India's economic scene shows that a vast multitude of Indians are unemployed and underemployed. In 1972-73, nearly 19.34 million Indians were seeking employment and that nearly 7.83 per cent of the rural population and 8.85 per cent of the urban population were unemployed. Nearly 30 per cent of the Indians thus were deprived of a proper livelihood.

A bulk of India's population is illiterate and unskilled which is being less than 30 per cent after the 30 years of independence. The illiteracy among the Harijans, minorities and the poor is almost total. (p.19).

"Garibi Hatao", "Nationalisation" etc. reflected the interests of the majority which has the electoral rights and actually exercises it. However, Kaushik is

interested in how this class nature of society is connected with the social forces influencing the political institutions and moulding the operations of political parties and the outcome of elections.

In the villages voting by the poor often follows the lines of what the Malik says. Whether they are labourers or Share-croppers, Harijans or next higher castes the landowners dictates to them the party/candidate they have to vote for. Often the method adopted is a simple one of voting by proxy. The labour leaves the choice to the landowner who advises and persuades them not to go to the booth as their vote would be cast. In case they are undecided and loose like vote for some one other than the choice of the landowner, they are prevented from voting. In turn, the rich peasants take care no issue of importance to the labour like oppression and alienation of land ever figures as electoral issues. The parties and their leaders too all a long have adopted a policy of "non-interference" in the rural sphere so as not to annoy the landlord / rich peasants, without whose assistance and feudal vote banks, no candidate could hope to win. This forms the basis of the voting pattern in rural areas except where there are impact of a conscious, well organised peasant movement and organisations of left political parties. (p. 31).

As for the lower caste groups and Harijans, their low caste position is not merely acting as a limiting factor, but at the same time such a low position has got reinforced by the deepening unemployment and poverty. The vast unemployment and the intense competition for the few available opportunities on land have led to differentiating the poor on the basis of caste contrasts, the sub-castes in turn becoming political factions, arranged on a further hierarchical caste pattern. This has weakened the solidarity among the poor and have limited their bargaining power. Thus the social conditions of the poor are doubly oppressive. The class oppression is aggravated by the caste discrimination (p.35-6).

Though slow, but concentrated growth of industrialisation in specific regions gave birth to a working class resulting into the emergence of trade union movement. This trade union movement is responsible for giving the politics a strong proletarian character with a higher level of political awareness and participation. However, this indicates now communist party of India appeared and grew only in the few industrial cities which still form their main regional base. But only a small section of the

urban working class is really organised. Because of this fact and other serious weaknesses in the organised class, like, lack of unity among the unions, too much adherence of the workers to traditional institutions and values, etc., there exists a narrow base in the unions which has necessitated an alliance between proletariat and other segments of wage earning class. Though nebulous and unreliable and still dependent for its sustenance and achievements on industrial proletariat, such an alliance has made possible political arrangements between the Left and the Right (Sometimes even communal) parties and brought a greater electoral success for the Left and Left-led coalitions. (pp.51-54).

Another phase of Indian political structure is governed by money in the pursuit of power which plays a very significant part in electoral politics. In 1960 elections, for example, it was worked out that in Madhya Pradesh for a parliamentary constituency, it might involve Rs. 1,20,000 per candidate for a campaign of 20 days. In U.P., the corresponding figure was worked out at Rs.5 Lakhs for 30 days. These election expenses were allowed by the big business. As the company financing of elections is based on the expectancy of a quid pro quo in varied forms, more and more companies have entered the fray.

This has led to a competition and an increase in the size of the contribution. This has made politics itself a business and electoral period the most opportune time for extorting the maximum contribution and benefits. Thus all the contributions are politically motivated, meant for getting a return in terms of economic and business advantages. This money power has helped to stabilise the Congress (pp 64-7).

Money has obviously helped in corrupting the electoral process by way of buying votes. It is believed that the direct role of money power in influencing the voting is negligible as the money which is received in the dubious way is not really distributed among voters. And even, where such distribution has taken place in terms of cash or kind, this does not ensure votes for the candidates. Of late, there are more instances of such distribution in kind, like blankets and cycles, having been resorted to openly, only to be proved important in influencing people. The 1977 elections is an outstanding example of this. (p.71).

K. Chandrasekhariah ⁷ speaks of social bases of politics in continuation with Kaushik. The mass

of people may^{be} considered as an integral part of the general social processes. The extent of an individual's involvement in society is measured in terms of identification and differentiation characterised by his family, neighbourhood, caste, class locality, caste, religions and linguistic groups. These systems are the edhering institutions to man in society. The caste has ritual and social significance in the sense that the local members of a caste group are unified by the observance of common rituals and the fulfilment of mutual obligations. Where a caste group is identified with a locality, caste ties become greatly reinforced. Thus caste helps in establishing the identity of an assemblage of persons who otherwise may remain less distinct and less homogeneous. The rigidity of the caste system is seen in the integrity of its ritual structure, which sustains a limited set of institutionalised relationship underlying family, marriage and kinship, while its more flexible character is observed in the differentiated and non-institutionalised structures created for the pursuit of the various interests. The integrating and the differentiating elements operate in the context of caste, which is often overlooked.

The fact that caste can nurture the interest groups which can voluntary and non-traditional is completely overlooked leading to the assertions often heard that

caste is the core of democratic politics in India. The democratic apparatus can not be sustained by any single caste group whether it is dominant or not. The dominant castes even with their traditional authority cannot keep at the normal functioning of democracy. The basis of traditional authority is the capacity to work for the common good. Within the interest groups one finds the convergence of the hopes and aspirations of the members of the caste group. The attainment of a common focus on political events is observed during the past decade or so, and the spontaneity with which such a community of interest has arisen, has countered the belief that the caste is inflexible and static. Political power and patronage are often associated in the minds of many, and this has led to distinct responses on the part of individuals and group, irrespective of caste affiliation. Under any political system, the pursuit of reasonable self or group interests is never suspect, and hence the emergence of the interest groups must have to be considered favourably. The interest group may be denoted by such terms as cliques, factions, and pressure groups, but they take up similar roles in all democratic societies. They are an integral ^{part} of all democratic societies, in contrast to the totalitarian political systems. They develop a rationale of their own and also a programme of

action , understanding of which makes intelligible the working of democratic institution. They evince keen interest in the democratic process and give expression to a sense of responsibility in respect of the hue of action promoted by them. This accountability of these groups in democratic action provides them a definite role in all democracies . So whenever the implications of caste in political behaviour comes under examination, the accountability and justification of any mode of action upheld by the caste based interest groups can not be overlooked.

The author observe in 1962 elections that no such complete uniformity existed in any of the caste or religious groups even where one of the candidates was a casteman. Besides, castes, there seems to be other factors like relative strength of party loyalties, the image of the candidate, intensity of election campaign, the inter-group relations within the constituency and finally the incentives and suggestive elements introduced by this contesting candidates which crystalize the patterns of voting choice. Caste, religion , or regionalism are also factors underlying unity and they are not much different from those prevailing in western democracy.

Whereas Owen M. Lynch⁸ pictured the changing life of the Agra Jatavs, and the theme of descriptive fact has occasionally been counterpointed by theoretical analysis. As caste is an adaptive structure, adaptational changes in caste organisation occur in two ways. First changes in the internal social organisation of caste tend to occur in such a way as to preserve caste integrity. Second, change in external relations of a caste to other caste tend to occur in such a way to maximise for a castes population its share caste scarce goods such as power, prestige, wealth and education. With modern political attitudes and traditional caste attitudes, Jatav moderates lead the association of Republican party. They balance traditional caste exclusiveness with modern political inclusiveness.

The second adoptive change that has been occurred in the Jatav caste is in its leadership. Effective leadership is no longer in the hands of the caste headmen and Pandes. It is now in the hands of the 'Politicians' and to some extent to the 'Big men' whose position are achieved and not ascribed. These men now speak for the Jatavs, represent and fight for their interests, and to some extent help solve or advise on problems internal to the caste.

In the pre-independence India, the Jatav leadership responded to the attempt at social mobility through Sakritisation. In post independence India the socio-political environment has changed and so, too, has the Jatav attempt at

mobility. Jatav have switched from an acceptance of caste through Sanskritic behaviour to a rejection of a caste through political participation. Political participation through Republican party has become the dominant or overriding technique of the Jatavs to get what they want, and the Buddhist identity has replaced Sanskritic Kshatriya identity. The present caste leadership with its three block is to some extent pragmatic and often to change. Buddhism and the Republican party are, in a sense, experiments in adoption. The third adoptive change of Jatav caste was to the shoe industry. The market system and to the government policy. The traditional Jatav caste occupation of leather working has evolved into a monopoly of shoe production. The Government's policy of "Protective discrimination" gives some slight advantage to the Scheduled castes over the non-scheduled castes.

The counts are now an alternative system of justice, and politicians from an alternative leadership for the Jatavs as well as for other castes. These new adaptation therefore, are functional differentiations out of the multi-functioned caste into a multi-functioned state and nation. As the functions of the caste become fewer, the strength of an individual's ties to it is weakened. At the same time the integration of Indian castes and their members into a more egalitarian society and a single Indian identity is thereby advanced.

Rajendra Singh:(1988)⁹ argues that as the substantive nature of the problem , the relationship between the rural elite and the agrarian power structure in the historico-evolutionary setting has been pursued through an analysis of the link between institutional and social structural factors- the link between land, power and people. However, an undifferentiated category of people located at the apex of the power hierarchy are elites. A sharp difference between the elites and the leaders lies in conceptualisation of the elites stable and enduring collectivity in the social structure which determines, shapes and often functions as a supply base for the leaders. In the exercise of power, the elite are not governed by native people exclusively.

There is a tendency of the rural elites to have deeper roots in the community and a longer history of pervasive power and domination. As opposed to the relative continuity of elites in the agrarian social structure, leaders rise to positions of power with meteoric success and then fall abruptly .Rural leaders reflect only the surface of the rural power structure. Elites, on the other hand, constitute the frame of that structure. And finally it can be said that whereas elites are more often potential leaders, leaders , are rarely leaders. At a higher level of abstraction, elites as a group function as a promotional avenue for the leaders, but a similar function can not be assigned to a leader. The object of the present literature demonstrate:(i) there exists a hierarchy of rural influentials; (ii) rural leaders as a distinct conceptual category occupy the lower stratum of power as compared to elite

who head the hierarchy ;(iii) in the study of rural elites, conventional methods and approaches of social science have so far been tuned more towards identifying and studying rural leaders rather than elites.

Established elites and emerging elites have formed their types in rural areas. Traditionally established rural influentials are in the first type. Ascriptive social and cultural foundations of traditional Indian society as upper caste status historicity of rulership, privileges and honour received from the British and exercise of control over land and related resources have brought them power and authority primarily. But their deriving power from post-feudal and colonial forces is the crucial and most distinguishing feature of this group.

But the disturbing revelations involve the traditional feudal colonial sources of power still persisting in U.P. It continues to be a long-term, stable, enduring and seems source of influence and domination. The established elites being anchored to feudal and colonial sources of power, are , therefore, more stable and to a great extent are historically continuing category. The emerging elites, this study suggests, instead of attacking the ramparts of feudal -colonial power and favouring an egalitarian society, attempt to convert the power derived from modern sources into the secure feudal-colonial bases of power are, in essence and in practice, reinforcing them. In this process, Indian modernity is incigorating and energising the traditional power ethos of U.P.

Sachida Nand Mishra (1980)¹⁰ Similarly points out that in the villages of today the older pattern of socio-caste, occupational and economic stratifications are being thwarted and shattered on account of the prevailing process of urbanisation, education, right to equality and right against exploitation, salaried employment, abolition of Zamindari Government facilities and from other agencies of political socialisation and so on. Attitudes of the youth towards occupation and other social mores underwent considerable change, and thus the social hierarchy is now determined by individual calibre and social abilities and no longer by caste. The interaction between upper and lower caste is not confined to their own classes, and this is how intercaste, class interactional and social structure now took a newer dimension. However all this came to witness change in the pattern of rural leadership (p.98).

The traditional leadership underwent vast change caused by the sound contribution of different agencies of political socialization, and that the traditional leaders had to welcome the new trends being inherent in the modern political affairs. Previously wealth and family status were playing the dominant roles in shaping the leadership structure. But now the wealth and status has been replaced with individual merit, aptitude for social service and democratic attitudes which are found much more among the emerging leaders than among traditional ones. Thus naturally, leadership is now shifting to educated youth from the uneducated traditionalists.

And a trend of diffusion of leadership in different castes which is apparently visible, has liquidated its concentration in higher income group, and that the increasing number of leadership in upper and lower classes, however, give rise to class consciousness, proportion of increase in number of leadership more among the lower classes than among the higher classes (pp. 106-14).

So far as the decision-making at the village level is concerned, it still remains the paternal property of influential members of the village community. The standard of participation of decision-makers is certainly very poor. Though procedure adopted for decision-making at Panchayat level is a democratic one, still due to lack of education, insight into the local problems, decisiveness and assertiveness, the degree of participation is very discouraging. Only Mukhis, the Sarpanchs, and a few vocal members participated effectively. The remaining members were listeners or passive advisors. However, it indicates that greater degree of participation in terms of frequency, initiative, elaboration and effectiveness is thoroughly conditioned by the higher levels of education and insight into the local problems (pp 137-34).

Balraj Puri (1987)¹¹ however, starts with violent dimension of politics. He holds that Rajiv-Longowal accord which did not get over all the Punjab problems is considered to be just a concrete step towards a solution. And therefore, a self-sustaining vicious circle which was formed by events like killings of innocents by the terrorists (about 400 till June, 1984), Operation Blue Star,

assassination of Indira Gandhi, anti-Sikh violence thereafter, decoration of army officers for their action on Barber Sahib, glorification of relatives of the alleged killers of Indira Gandhi and go on has now come to an end. The press, the civil liberties movement and the opposition as the positive features of democracy are all praiseworthy. But though, a change in the Akali Dal stance on extremes in and terrorism was marked after its elision from the political scene of Punjab, it soon proved wrong, because the Sikh perception was not agreeable to the agreement. Many Hindus therefore developed suspicion about the Sikhs agreeing with the accord.

Though not hostile, Hindus, who were devoid of understanding, failed to perceive of the actual demands of the Sikhs. Moreover, a conflict in perception arises in the Sikh and Hindu minds-between the historic past and the recent form. Besides, Sikhism as the only religion on democratic lines, growing awareness and self-consciousness with the transfer of power, and lack of territorial character as being adjoined with India and emergence of religion and region as two most powerful bases of identity formation on account of the process of politicisation, education, communication, development and so on, have sharpened the Sikh urge of identity. Their mixed sentiments, religious and regional, are ever put forward by the Dal as regional rather than religious issues. But, incapacity to take out power from the Gurdwaras and the more sceptical outlook of the government and the Hindus of the Punjabi identity pulled down their

claim. In this regard efforts exerted by Nehru and Indira Gandhi merit mention.

Claim of the Punjabi Hindus to be Hindi speaking by repudiating their mother tongue in the census of 1951 and 1961 and the communal character of the Akali Dal also undermined the composite regional identity of Punjab.

But its manifestations do not weaken a pluralistic society but are an emotional addition to its content. Dynamic character of the Sikhs^{of} the recent past is reckoned but they are now as exhausted as inadequate for a distinct role they claim and are deprived of an effective share of political power the most powerful urge of a self-conscious community badly lacking in proportion to the economic development in the State and the growth of their solidarity. Lies at its root is the growing communal polarisation the advantage of which could be taken by the Congress for returning to power proving itself to be the principal cause of Dal's frustration. And Anandpur Sahib resolution was the result of the aim of searching for new institutional and Constitutional power arrangements which has resulted into hostility of the nation magnifying secessionist implications.

V.N. Subba Rao (1987)¹² writes, "Nearly 200 vehicles a majority of them two-wheelers including bicycles-were burnt down, more than 200 shops were either looted or set on fire and more than 400 private homes were looted or burnt or damaged. These sins resulted in over 800 arrests. At least 4 persons killed and 250

injured of whom 75 policemen of various ranks, and the total loss of property is worth Rs. 88 lakh.

"Immediate cause of the flare-up of the riots was the controversial short story in the Deccan Herald, 'Mohammed the Idiot' which eventually cause Muslims sufferings more than the Harijans, the riot adversary. Women and children took the burnt of the midnight Swoop on their huts many of which 240 were either ransacked or demolished or burnt down, while the most of the men were taken away by the police earlier."

A striking feature of the incidents is that every prominent Muslim admits that the lumpens of their own community should take the blame for triggering off the trouble. Another thing the Muslim admits was the highhandedness of the police and the exploitation of the situation by anti-social elements on either side. The police, in fact, seem to have been the slow starters, but once they swung into action, they seem to have overreacted flushing out those who sought refuge in the bungalows and even poorer homes of the poorest people. In Bangalore, on the previous day, they went about dealing antisocial elements quite ruthlessly and even police circles admit that there might have been some wrong arrests. But even the Muslim leaders who allege police highhandedness absolve DIG Dr. Ramnugam, S.P. Munikrishna and special IOP Sridharan of blame.

With regard to who are guilty of what blunders had taken place in the city, Mukhter Unnissa Begam, the Congress (I) MLA

representing the Mandi Mohalla region where much of the trouble in Mysore was concentrated has raised some pertinent questions. Why were the roughnecks in the city not rounded up the moment trouble flared up in neighbouring Bangalore? When none of the MLAs or MPs were available in town, on whose assurance of good conduct did the police allow the Muslim procession of around 15,000 people to be taken out? Could not the minor politicians who approached the authorities for permission to take out the procession have been handled more tactfully? When just a couple of months ago, anti-Vankata-Swamy commission agitators had gone on rampage for almost two weeks on the high ways of the state, throwing normal life completely out of gear and the government had not thought it fit to raise a finger to help, how it was so eager to open fire in Bangalore and Mysore at the highest sign of trouble. And why were the demonstrators fired at at close range and above the knee disregarding all rules? And which the senior police officers ordered the firing in Mysore?

Azeez Seit, an acknowledged Muslim leader, unhesitatingly put the blame squarely on the mischief imported from the north who were virtually responsible for triggering off the trouble by means of advising organising and taking out a huge procession. And this was supported by some long-drawn strife prevailing between the Hindus and the Muslims the most possible advantage was fairly taken by the anti-social elements on the day of procession. All these, however, took place at the cost human lives, properties and above all, a long-cherished communal harmony (pp 92-8).

A similar political feature has become obvious in the writing of Ajoy Bose (1987)¹³. Assassination of Indira Gandhi by Sikh body-guards not only created panic and chaos in the city capital of Delhi, but also painted the political affairs in communal tinge. And from then onwards, Sikhs, irrespective of their political affiliation and belongingness, were put to death with no other consideration and rationale. Therefore, upon getting the news that the Prime Minister was shot by Sikh security guards, any petty Sikh party followers or Congress members could hardly dare go to visit her while admitted to AIIMS. If some one of the Sikhs fell to be there with their traditional turbans, he was scarcely spared to be attacked. There was a case : a Sikh Congressman dressed in Khedder, one of the major symbols of the party, was standing among all others frenzied mob towards him for fatal attack, he just saved his life by fleeing hair-breadth escape. Hence forth, no Sikhs except senior ministers coming to visit the hospital were seen inside the Institute compound. (p.117).

Another illustrating case may be put forth here. Mr. Zail Singh came to the hospital at 5 p.m. along with a motorcade from the Palam Airport (Mr. Singh was out of the country when Mrs. Gandhi was shot and cut short his visit when got the news). As soon as the crowd caught sight of the front rider a Sikh, it turned into mob. "Nobody knows who chucked the first stone at the presidential motorcade but within minutes sustained stoning had started. While the presidents bullet proof car escaped unscathed, his front rider

as well as the other cars in his motorcade were stoned senselessly. (p.111)

It was the beginning of mob rule and anarchy in the city in order to wash out the entire race of the Sikhs. And there started all types of atrocities in the process of genocide- looting, arson, murder, burning of houses, damaging of properties and cars and other vehicles belong to the bearded and turbaned persons. And soon beard became the target point of attacks by the mobs. Therefore, many Sikhs seemed to appear clean shaven as one narrated: Early on Friday morning a bleeding man in tattered clothes staggered into the Indian Express office. He was shaven but he said that he was a Sikh from Trilokpuri who had shaved his beard to save himself from Hindu mobs who he said were massacring every Sikh male in the colony (p.122).

In frenzied mobs attacked these houses owned by unknown persons which bore name-plates with 'Singh' guessing the Sikhs be therein. Thus many non-Sikh city-dwellers possessing Singh with their names put on the plates fell their prey. Many others with 'Singh' plates had to appear to the mobs just to correct them in this regard. Those houses the chased Sikhs rushed into for the sake of their lives were not even left out to burnt down. Here is a case : Just in front of the information and Broadcasting Ministry, a mob stopped a taxi driver by a Sikh. The driver left his vehicle and fled into a nearby house which happened to belong to the Lok Dal member of Parliament, Ram Vilas Paswan. "The mob first burnt the taxi and then went inside Paswan's house and dragged out the Sikh driver. They tied his hands with his turban and threw him into

the blazing taxi. The mob also attacked Paswan's house and set it on fire. Paswan as well as the Bihar Lok Dal leader, Karpoori Thakur who was with him at that time, managed to escape by the hair's breadth by the back door of the house (p.120)

However, in all trouble-prone centres, the role of the police was strangely noticeable to be inactive as if silent spectators enjoyed their pastime. Even when the presidents motorcade was being stoned, the police refused to act. Until, the Sikhs had started retaliating by Thursday evening, the police looked on what were happening.

Anita Pratap (1987)¹⁴ also deals with a similar dimension who writes. "There was no doubt that the Muslim anger in Karnataka that culminated with the death of 16 persons in police firings was provoked by the short story defamatory to the holy Prophet that was published in the Sunday magazine section Deccan Herald. Moreover, the present decade is marked by the minority resentments against the Kannada dominance based on Cokak agitation. In spite, Mr. Hegde bows to the interests of the majority community because, in view of the intractable caste politics of Karnataka Mr. Hegde has very little option other than to please the majority community on sticky issues. Hindu fundamentalism that vitiates communal harmony in the state is rationalised by the minorities "exploitation of Hindus' tolerance and endurance. Moreover, the sharp increase in communal clashes in the last one year alone -riots in Bijapur,

Gulbarga , K.R. Nagar, Bethangady , Bagalkot and Ramnageraa, and any other agitation- Kodagu problem in Coorg or the Mysore incidents , all pushed the situation to linguistic or communal differences. Prominent Hindu leaders have not taken kindly to which Deccan Herald went to apologise for the careless publication.

The spontaneous outburst of the 5,000 Muslims caused a gherao of the Deccan Herald office by 4 p.m..It has been revealed that the subsequent spread of the agitation in Mysore, Tumkur, Bidar and Kolar was fanned by Congress (I) politicians. Wherever, the Congress (I) politicians were active police had to open fire. In Bangalore, the role played by former congress minister Mr.Ibrahim has been played by both press and public. A rabble -rouser to the core, Mr. Ibrahim was at the spot shortly before all hell broke loose in front of Deccan Herald office on December 7. Having represented the Shivaji Nagar constituency of Bangalore city, Mr. Ibrahim does hold some Sway over this Muslim dominated constituency.

At a press conference, Mr. Ibrahim stoutly defended himself and with a sense of outrage denied that he had been an agent provocateur. But demagogy comes naturally to him and even at a press conference he got worked up and made some emotional comments. A man who thrives on controversy, Mr. Ibrahim was clearly happy that he was receiving a lot of publicity. For a man starved of publicity, any news is good news.

In Mysore, Congress (I) M.P., Hajee Sait did instigate his followers. Most of the arrested persons were found to be the followers of Hajee Sait. It was most unfortunate that in Mysore the disturbances acquired a communal colour. Senior Janata Party members castigating the Congress (I) elements for exploiting a turbulent situation for their own selfish political gains said the main purpose behind the instigation was to damage the reputation of the Hegde government in view of the upcoming Panchayat elections.

Asghar Ali Engineer (1987)¹⁵ throws his own point of view of communal politics. He writes, "As a trading centre of cotton and film distribution controlled by state cooperatives and private cooperative Societies and by Private individuals and companies, respectively, Amravati is a centre of gambling controlled by powerful underworld elements. Muslim represents 20 per cent of its population, yet Amravati was peaceful while free of communal virus because Amravati has been a traditional stronghold of single party-congress/ Congress (I). Out of 9 M.A.L.s today, 7 belonged to this party. Muslims, Dalits and Sindhis have generally voted for the Congress. Opposition parties and communal parties had almost no hold there."

But even then why there were riots in Amravati? Thickening fog of communalism caused by caste and communal forces, uneven distribution of economic resources large-scale mobilisation of votes on these lines, conflict in Punjab, Ramjansa Bhoomi-Sabri Masjid controversy, Shabbano agitation etc were engulfing the entire social

environment. The communal and fundamentalist forces as well as the secular political parties became operative to exploit such sentiments.

On the other hand, the recent film-strike in Maharashtra threw many out of earnings and thus put them into the hands of anti-social elements. Also police raids on gambling dens handed by the police boss Mr. Sharma caused severe frustration among the den-lords and brought to police the communal hatred. More significantly, Shiv Sena was trying to capture some seats of Amravati Corporation and employed the same policy as did in Nasik, Panvel and other towns of Maharashtra- incite communal passion to get sympathetic hearing.

Meanwhile Mr. Bhujbal, the Sena leader and former major of Bombay visited on Amravati and Warud where there was a bloody incident on 15 October with the loss of three lives. It must be noted that the riots in Nasik in May 1986 also followed Bhujbal's visit. However, the trouble started on 2 November night. The triggering incident in this case was a petty quarrel over playing cards near Kholapura Gate by some Muslims.

Coming back to the events following the warud incidents in which three Hindus were killed in the police firing, a call for Amravati Bandh was given by the Shiv Sena on 23 October. The Muslims and the Sindhis refused to down the Sutters. This further raised the level of Communal tension. It was followed by Ghyaneshwar Karole

objecting to five Muslim youths playing cards outside his house. One of them assaulted him with razor blade and a minor scuffle followed. And in the night of 2 November, the strike-victims, - cycle rickshaw pullers and others, and the den-gamblers close to the den-lords, Kailash Solanki, Ahmad Jabbar, Tarabai and others, started looting and burning the crowded localities. In the face of alligations and counter allegations it is very difficult to establish who did it first. The Hindus maintain that the Muslims attacked Hanuman Nagar shouting slogans- "Hindustan Mordebad", 'Allah Zindabad", while the Muslims say that the slogans of "Jai Shiveji " rent the air whole night when their longer were being attacked. Many Muslim and Hindu shops outside the Kholapura Gate were looted. The Muslims complained that police looked on while their houses were burning.

controlled

However, the riots were ~~over~~ after 3 November with 537 persons under custody including Jabbar and his associates. But the due consequences were manifold. Most of the hand-to-mouth people living in the low and cheap-built houses in the narrow lanes and by lanes were economically shattered. Thus Amravati riots once again proved how petty is extricably linked with communal riots and how politicians leave no available opportunity to exploit religious and similar other parochial sentiments to gain some ground among one or the other community. The politics in India today is neither

value-oriented nor issue-oriented, nor programme-oriented. It is such a crass opportunism that common man suffers intensely from economic hardships with deterioration in quality of living due to this opportunistic and communalistic politics. It is the poorest who suffered and would continue to suffer in such riots fuelled and fanned ^{by} politics. (pp 77-95)

Asghar Ali Engineer (1987)¹⁶ in his another write-up, Communalism-Its theoretical and practical Dimensions, considers communalism as a "modern political phenomenon-not a religious phenomenon(p.25). And it has taken-birth on Indian Soil when the British government introduced the Local Self-government Act in Certain Northern Provinces which Sir Syed had opposed vehemently. Because with the advent of Local Self-government,..."all of us started asserting ourselves for our share and that is where communalism takes birth, because of want more and more share in power (p.35-6).

But communalism is a secular phenomenon - and not any religious issues. Since 1905 and untill 1940, the whole history of Muslim League struggle did not show any religious issue raised throughout the length and breadth of this period. It always benefits the elite and none. Whether it is the campaign of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or that of the R.S.S. or that of the Muslim league, it is always the elitist point of view. Even They use this religious

identity, or linguistic identity, or cultural identity, to realise their own ambitions, not the aspirations of the masses -peasants and workers of the community. But any demands raised on behalf of or ostensibly in behalf of, a certain community, it does look communalistic, because the demands can not be expressed in secular terms in the event of their selfish and earthly appearance and would fail to arouse emotions of an entire community. Therefore the demands are couched in an idiom which would thoroughly arouse the emotions of the whole community (pp. 38-9). Thus, it can be held that no communal are working for the welfare of the masses.

On minority community, Iqbal and Hamza Alvi can rightly be quoted. In 1937, Iqbal wrote a letter to Jinnah informing that Muslim league leaders have not paid adequate attention to poverty and misery of the Muslim masses. Hamza Alvi wrote in one of his recent writings that it was the salaried class of the Muslims which became the backbone of Muslim league. Communalism was all about secular demands of the elite of a particular community, and it is these demands which give rise to the phenomenon of communalism, and when it acquires a certain degree of sharpness, it results in violence (pp 40-1).

The socio-economic development took place in such a way that it tended to benefit certain castes in ^{our} social structure and certain communities and certain regions. Certain regions developed such more that or at the cost of other regions. Certain castes developed

much more than or at the cost of other castes, certain communities developed much more than or at the cost of other communities and that created social tensions. So any process of socio-economic development would be at the cost of some group or the other. That group would be economic in nature, or it could ^{be} religious, that is caste or community group.

A few castes benefited much more than other castes, a few communities much more than others and a few regions much more than other regions. Naturally those who were left behind or were deprived after all socio-economic development, modern technology, reduce distances, bring communications at the door-step widen the horizons, sharpen the consciousness of people and that is why Harijans became more and more conscious of their rights. Religious minorities like, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs began to be more conscious of their rights.

The caste problem became very much sharpened after 1965. Untouchability has been there in this country for centuries. Harijans were always insulted and hated, but were not being burnt alive, not being brutally killed. But after 1965 this kind of violence began to be organised against them. Example can be drawn from a village of Tamilnadu where fourteen Harijans were burnt alive and many more were injured. The single reason was that these Harijans disagreed with the landlords who wanted them to employ at dirt cheap price in agriculture lying at the outset of Green Revolution.

From 1980 onwards Indira Gandhi's perception of the political situation completely changes. She was depending on minority and Harijan votes. She now came to the conclusion that she can no longer depend on Muslim votes, no longer depend on support from the South, because at that time N.T. Rama Rao came to power. Her regional perception changed - and also communal. Now she seeks support from the Hindus - Hindu belt and became suggestive towards the Hindu communal forces- the R.S.S. and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. After the Veenakshipuram incident, Vishwa Hindu Parishad became very strong and in a number of places constructed temples one of which was inaugurated by Mrs. Gandhi at Mathura and another was to be inaugurated by the President of India. Since then there took place many riots engineered by Vishwa Hindu Parishad at various places. Bapunagar, Baroda, Nasik, Panvel, Auranabad, Mandad and Unapur are of the most affected riot centres, for example. In short, Engineer holds that the communal riots ultimately benefited the political reactionaries from both sides- Hindus and Muslims.

Salman Khurshid (1987)¹⁷ in his book, *At Home in India-A Resentment of Indian Muslims*, holds that India since independence has had lot of experiences of sporadic occurrence of communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. These riots are often caused by two major factors : first, a deep and disguised growth of hatred ; and second, the reaction against the changing patterns of economic development of the Muslim community. The riots which have occurred in Ahmedabad, Moradabad, Meerut, Bhiwandi, Bombay, Jabalpur,

Hyderabad, Aligarh and long lines of other towns and cities have shattered the lives and properties of the Muslims. Once the early stage of killing is over and the dawn to dusk curfew has settled the dusk of disturbances, retaliation begins - not between the communities but between the administration and the community.

This is where a serious problem arises of caste and religious denomination of the officers and men engaged in the services. Invariably paramilitary forces and armed police deployed in riot prove or riot-affected areas have an overwhelming majority of non-Muslims who have hardly any sympathy or empathy for them. Relations between the Muslims and deployed forces deteriorates very rapidly and with it the bitterness of the riot is exacerbated. Most of the riot-hit areas have experienced this example. The author quoted H.C. Saxena who wrote on Meerut riots of 1982 and on genocide-attitude of the police forces and the Government towards the Muslim Community (pp. 112-125).

It is only upon two occasions that questions regarding legitimate expectations of Muslims in India and the appropriate approaches of their leaders arise - when innumerable ordinary Muslims^{are} mercilessly slaughtered in communal riots of the kind that shame any civilisation and when something happens which evokes the curiosity of non-Muslims about the nature of Muslim Personal Law. Graphically, the leaders of the Muslim community can be divided

into the following groups : there are the steady pro-establishment leaders who have long been convinced that their mere association with majority leadership will guarantee them and their community a gradual assertion of rights- they are called the Sarkari Seth. Then comes their antithesis, Maulavi Chatera, firmly rooted in the most archaic and rigid interpretations, not only of the Quran and Hadis but also observe rituals of social conduct. They do not always express their opinions publicly, that is to say, to an audience of mixed persuasion of faith, but relentlessly speak of a distinction between the Kafir (unbelievers) and momins (believers). Inspired by Maulavi Chatera and pushed by their own feeling of rootlessness, there is a category of leaders called sheru Khan or the militants. These dream of converting India to its golden past of 'Paradise' borrowing in the process, both resources and questionable wisdom of pan-Islamic fundamentalists elsewhere in the world. Floating across the spectrum but constantly attempting to prove themselves liberal, secular and devoted nationalists, are the progressive intellectuals or Theaura Akbari. In their pursuit for intellectual respectability they ride rough shod over Muslim sentiments but raise their voices for the Muslim cause once in a while to preserve an advantage over their counterparts outside the community. There is one more category, that of Gunchup Shah, the fellow with the comfortable job who knows that the rest of his community are not so fortunate but also believes that a vociferous protest from would do them little good but do him a world of harm. And thus these five characters lead common Muslim citizen Shamsher, in

diverse directions and to differing conclusions. The result, of course, is that he follows each a little bit and blames his condition on destiny as in Iqbal's famous poem, *Shikwa*.

The entire galaxy of leaders are, to any extent, exploitative towards the Muslim masses, psychopants to the authorities and close to the masses for their personal reasons. For example, the Jamuna /keari, the most dubious conduct of the five, prefers to superimpose his superior knowledge and wisdom upon the voice of the people. He interfered with Aligarh Muslim University, arguing that a secular country could not possibly entertain a claim for a minority character for AMU (p. 128).

Another example involves Maulavi Chetara, who lives in snatches of oblivion and eminence. From time to time, when elections are at hand or a riot-affected populace is to be pacified, Maulavi Chetara is removed from the mothballs and conducted along red carpets to intervene. Likewise Sheru Khan, Simple, passionate, emotional, impetuous, foolhardy and illiterate, appears when there is trouble. He lives a life of very difficult occupations like informal trade and estate development involving a heavy reliance on muscle and constant brushes with the law. But he can claim to be the object of affection for hundreds of Muslims for whom Shewandi may come once in a decade but daily doses of hunger and humiliation are common. They don't look for grandeur and status. They only seek a familiar face, a comforting word and the knowledge that their leader has sufficient power to

protect them from dishonourable inclinations of man and nature .

(pp. 122-30).

In the light of these categories of Muslim leadership, the intermingling characteristics can be attributed to any degree, to all the so-called 'dedicated souls' in ^{the} cause of Muslims well being .Therefore, these attributes of leadership may have included Ibrahim Kuleiman Gaith, President of the Indian Union Muslim League, Syed Shehabuddin, the mercurial Muslim leader of Janata Party, Ishtiaque Abidi former joint Secretary of the BICL(I), Mir Masrulla, Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir , A.R. Ansari, Mohsina Kidwai, Khurshid Alam Khan, Abdul Ghafoor, A.M.A. Chani Khan Chaudhury, Nazma Heptulla, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Arif Mohammad Khan, Ahmed Patil, Farid Anwar, Shazia Jureshi, Imtiaz Khan, Saleem Sherani, Fazle Masud, Haseen Ahmed, Zafar Ali Naqvi, Poonam Saig, Shehmawaz Khan, Saiyed Nurul Hasan, V.A. Seyid Muhammad, C.A.Jaffer Sharif , Mohammad Yunus Saleem, Mohammad Usma Arif and others on the lines.

C.Parvathamma (1971)¹⁸ puts forth another social issue which occupies a prominent place in political life of people. Kshetra linga temple situated in the village of Kshetra , is a major regional and local cult centre. It dominates the village and affects all fields of social activity often appearing as a major source of political involvement of village castes. As a result , the Veerasaivas supported by the Veerasaivas from neighbouring villages

coveted the Kshatriya ownership and control of temple resources, for the ultimate symbol of dominance in the village is control of the temple. They failed to secure the dominance, and therefore exerted pressure on the Kshatriya for nearly four decades. The situation has been stabilised in the early 1920s by a legal decision in favour of the Kshatriyas.

The limitations put on Kshatriya power and privileges by the Govt. led to a steady rise in the power of Veerasaivas. But the Govt. regulation regarding the temple administration especially its hold on temple funds paved the way for contacts between the Kshatriyas and officials. The official contacts, almost a privilege enjoyed by the Kshatriyas to the exclusion of the villagers, helped the Kshatriyas to retain and exercise traditional power in the village. The role of the greater political powers is clearly visible here.

In independent India, the struggle between the Lingayats and Kshatriyas in Kshetra entered a new field. The relationship between the two groups has been marked by increased tension, especially in political arena, and this also discernible at the state level. With the introduction of the statutory Panchayat Board an anti-Kshatriya party of Lingayats has emerged. Elected leaders of the village Panchayat Board are the non-official members who work also with govt officials in the administration of the

village. In Kshetra, the Lingayat party is attempting to secure control of the village Panchayat Board and in particular the office of the Panchayat President, hitherto, held by a senior member of the Kshatriya family.

The increasing self awareness of their identity and distinctness among the lingayats of Kshetra is to be considered in the light of changes that have come about in a wider area. The formation of the new Mysore state according to the State's Reorganization Act of 1956, has resulted in Lingayats forming the largest single group in the state. Since then the political leadership of the state has passed into their hands. The emergence of Lingayats as a dominant caste at the state level is affecting inter-caste political relationships at local level and is creating a feeling for political power among Lingayats of Kshetra.

The Lingayats have begun to realise that the Kshetra, Linga temple is a stumbling block to their political aspirations. Until recently, external agents like Govt. and pilgrims helped to redress a situation in sectarian particularism threatened to upset the working of the village. With a change attitude and increase of Lingayat Solidarity, the role of the temple in the village politics has also acquired a new dimension. Political behaviour is influenced by appeals to the religious susceptibilities of the people through the temple. The conflict of traditional values, as buttressed by religion, with new social systems that economic and political changes are bringing into existence is discernible here.

The traditional political role of the Kshatriyas is being challenged by the Lingayats is a case in point. Also the Kshatriya President's party is able to control the democratic U.P.B. by exploiting the symbolic appeal of the temple. The symbols used by the Lingayat party, especially those drawn from Western economic and political sources, were less successful in impressing the villagers during Panchayat elections. In some respects the Veerasaiva religious movement invoked a new set of values, close to the western secular outlook. But it was not able to succeed against the traditional values of Hindu society.

With the introduction of Panchayat system of village administration the Lingayats have shifted their attention from the temple and its economy to the Panchayat and want to dominate the village politically, political control being the ultimate symbol of authority in the village. With this change in Lingayat strategy the role of the temple has acquired a new dimension, in that the temple overtly affects the political behaviour of the people in the village. The religious susceptibilities of the people and the rituals and economic implications are playing very important roles so as to sustain the Kshatriya dominance in the village.

With the increasing number of Lingayat youth getting higher education, and the increasing political awareness and the advantages of belonging to a dominant caste fanned by favourable the external wind, it is possible to bring about a change in leadership. Since

part of Kshatriya success in the village is due to Lingayat support, leadership can be passed on smoothly into the hands of pro-Kshatriya Lingayats. This has already come about during the 1968 village Panchayat elections. The fact that the Lingayat sub-castes are riven with internal differences and they have never united even for a common cause, suggests that unity among them as has been evident till now with pro- and anti-Kshatriya Lingayat sub-castes and households. The weaknesses of the Lingayats are the strong points of the Kshatriyas and vice-versa. The Kshatriyas who are lacking many essential factors can no longer force their leadership. The best way out to keep leadership within their circle perhaps amenable to them at the future date should a Kshatriya member develop liking for politics. This can still happen so long as the temple is controlled by Kshatriyas. Politics and religion can fuse together or bring about a fission. The known history of Kshetras high lights these two aspects very well.

J.C. Heesterman (1979)¹⁹ in his paper, power and tradition in Indian Politics, is concerned primarily with the relationship between levels of reality in the world view of Hinduism, between the order of society and politics and that of religion. Heesterman discerns a characteristically Indian conflict between the immanent order of social relations, which depends upon transactions between pure and impure castes, and the higher order of transcendence. The function of the great Tradition is to provide an unchanging model to which present social and political realities seek to conform.

In the realm of politics Heesterman analysis the key relationship between de facto power and legitimising authority: the Indian terms, between the king, a Kshatra, and the Brahman. From a study of a royal consecration ceremony he concluded that the ancient Indian state of the Brahmins was not a territorial unit over which the king presided. Rather, it was a clan system. Membership of the state depended not upon the residence but upon membership of clan, with the king's position deriving from a contract between clans. The king does not transcend the community or rule by divine transcendent right. However powerful he may be his authority is derived from the community. This concept of kingship ushers in the world of real politics with royal authority dependent upon the shifting relationships, rivalry and factionalism within the community.

The king is a conqueror. The royal consecration ceremony bespeaks the recognition of the authority's dependence upon institutionalised conflict. When Indian civilisation attacked the problem of lifting authority from the continually shifting ground of personal relations and fixed order sustained by it, there was involved a fundamental change of 'Weltanschauung' that set the terms of Indian tradition.

Heesterman finds the most coherent reflection of the change in the Shrautaritual. The ritual concerns not institutionalised conflict but individual sacrifice, divorced from the community.

The sacrificer is elevated above the transactions of the social order. He is world renouncer. The change implied a dichotomy of universe. On the one hand the worldly sphere of social relations, on the other the otherworldly sphere of the individual, cut off from society and transcending it. The effect of the segregation was, however, to leave the social order unreformed. Authority having been siphoned off, the state lacked the means to rise above the essential instability of personal relations.

Heesterman concludes that the essence of Indian tradition is the continued co-existence of a social reality with a transcendent theory that denies reality not as a consequence of insufficient understanding but as a matter of principle. The leitmotif of Indian tradition is the continuing attempt, under different influences, to bridge the gap. Thus the modern caste association stands between the local jati and the supra local varna. And even more significant example of the quest for legitimation is the tenor of Gandhi's leadership of the nationalist movement. Gandhi's extraordinary capacities were cast in the mould of the classical renouncer.

To be precise, Heesterman viewed that the Indian Weltanschauung is characterised by a dualistic conception of reality. The immanent order of social and political relations is one of conflict and competition. Its arrangements are justified to^{be} legitimised by appeal to their consistency with the transcendent order of a Great Tradition (pp.62-63).

J. Duncan M. Derrett (1979)²⁰ finds ample evidence of the consonance of modern Indian law with particular traditions where appearances are to the contrary. The major contribution of this paper to the study of tradition lies in the significance that Derrett attaches to the ubiquity of litigation in India. He finds the key to this phenomenon in the fierce competition of castes for scarce resources, which has given rise to interminable appeals for legal arbiters to balance claims and determine status. The fundamental part of Indian life appears as institutionalised caste conflict, once controlled by kings but now regulated by politicians or by the law courts. The appeal of Indian society is characteristically to an authority beyond itself : to a tradition-oriented system of law will legitimise de facto power as status or prestige. However there is an order beyond that of competition and law. Its name is religion, the counterpart and concomitant of family and public life. For Derrett, " I feel that Indian family life, the subcaste, as the unit which contributes most to the individuals security and to which he is therefore willing to give most, and above this the competing factions and units, the individuals notion of obligation and his psychology is framed within these concentric horizons..... Indians by race who are thorough citizens of Camden will soon be on our doorsteps as students. Their idea of their place in society is bound to be very different from that of their cousins in India brought up under the scorching sun, victims of family, caste, village district party and other pressures (p-96).

B.Bhaskaren (1967)²¹ in his "sociology of Politics-Tradition and politics in India", has adopted a very different angle to see things prevailing in Indian political arena. 'Professor Shils has noted how out-of-date Indian intellectuals are : equally 'out dated ; are our political leaders, Political leaders acquire and maintain their positions not by similarity to their counterparts in other nations, not in virtue of adherence to stated principles and ideologies, not as the reward of proven personal service to party or nation, but fundamentally because they 'belong' in a special way to the 'people' who identify and follow them. It is this feature which inhibits replacement of leaders and makes leadership a life tenure and even hereditary' (p.41).

Responsible for occurrence of this situation, caste is one of many other factors. The power of caste is enhanced by the extremely permissive nature of Indian Social order. The story of Madras politics during the past half century shows an intelligible and in many ways very viable pattern of political adjustment of the instruments of modern representative government to the exigencies of a durable social order based on caste (p.43).

During the seventeen years since 1947 the local political situation was in a state of continuous inarticulate adjustment to the local facts, a state on which very little theoretical or analytical attention was bestowed....The model of leadership developed by Nehru on western lines was widely copied and in several regions (large and small) and different parties (based on community or principles of economic organisation), and even

in the administrative hierarchy successful leaders tended to follow his modes and procedures. It was totalitarian in the sense that every endeavour, however, limited, was conceived as an integral part of a total national or even global effort. (P.60)

Stability and security are the advantages of this order. Violence and war are expressions of impatience with an order which initially springs in the individual and spreads to others who rally to his banner to replace or refashion that order.

For over a generation our society has been troubled by a growing sense of irreconcilable political difference springing from the difference of creed. The communal problem has been our central problem. The prospect of political power passing to the people of the country roused fears and suspicions strong enough in the end to divide the country. Even in the provincial societies which are almost wholly composed of Hindus a similar division into hostile camps has been possible on account of caste.

Qasim Hasan (1987)²² sees that since India is a sacred society, religion comes into the life of the individual even before his birth in as much as his parents were in Wedlock according to religious rites and had constantly performed religious ceremonies till he actually came into this life (p.48). This explains why a person with all his secular outlook does not or cannot forsake his religious bias. All the actions, social and political, stem from the inner most fountain of his religious consciousness. This is

why the contribution of religion to the Indian nationalism is now widely recognised by prominent historians and political thinkers. While Hindu communalists can cover their ideology under the mask of nationalism, Muslim communalists have no such device of justification or camouflage for their intentions. The only alternative available to the communalist Muslims is to justify communalism by making a distinction between assertive communalism of the majority and defensive communalism of minority , (p.49).

Dr.Hasan puts it "It is asserted again and again that Muslims maladjustment to the demands of the contemporary life is rooted in their refusal to modernise themselves. Muslims are therefore considered to be orthodox, dogmatic and blind to the realities of contemporary life. These observations came from different quarters: Sympathetic as well as hostile, anxious as well as contemptuous, secular as well as communal, liberal sections of the community as well as people committed to different political ideologies, elite orientated from the community as well as those suffering from the complex of self-hatred".(57).

Hasan's analysis of facts about Muslims now turns to discuss the charges made against Muslims extra-territorial loyalty, the conspiracy to convert India into an Islamic State and so on. And, therefore, he argues that "This is so, because intergroup beliefs, irrespective of their being anchored to reality or otherwise being derived from the subjective reconstruction of ambiguous situation, play an important role in intercommunity relations. Nevertheless, one should not ignore the fact that the

description of the attitudes are shared by all the members of one group towards all the members of the target group."

All the more, Muslims' large-scale migration out of sheer necessity is also blamed and condemned. But fact lies that when no one can take exception to migration of those Muslims to Pakistan who subscribed to the two-nation theory, sudden migration of those prominent Muslims who were either known to be staunch nationalist or who decided to stay in the country and sworn loyalty to India, is regarded as the verification of the theory that all Muslims in their heart are more loyal to Pakistan and other Muslim countries than to India.

Besides, blind and rigid adherence to religious dogmas, like jehad and tradition of aggression, excessive and exclusive concern with the welfare of the community, separatism and superiority complex, are considered to be the attributes of Muslim psyche. Those who are predisposed to be anti-democratic could never be expected to adjust themselves in a democratic and multi-religious /ethnic society. Many instances of continuation of Muslims prepartition communal mentality and the propagation of such mentality by organizations like Jamiat-ul-Ulami and Jamiat-e-Islami are furnished. According to Dr. Hasan of all the factors that restrict Muslims deeper involvement in national life is the tradition of pan-Islamism and the rejection of modern ideologies of nationalism and secularism.

S.N. Singh's (1961) ²³ research indicates that traditional leadership in any type of situation based on authority and power has failed to educate people. This is because the leaders feel that their followers have no creative ability in them. Though, through the process of extension education, India hopes to solve the gigantic problem of educating her rural population by the local leaders who are expected to be able to play an important role in the process, yet the result of all is far from satisfactory because of the following factors :

- (1) The pattern of leadership in Indian villages is still primarily based on heredity and caste structure. Village landlords or Zamindars, the village headmen, the patel or lambardar and the village priest may be classed as the hereditary type of leaders. The other type of leadership which is not so prominent or obvious, but which does exist, is the type based on occupational patterns and functional groups which are in turn closely governed by the caste structure. The influence of these leaders is not widespread but generally restricted to a particular group of people. (336-37).

Besides these, there are two other types of leadership which exist in the villages today. The first one is personal leadership. In several villages there are persons who are looked upon and respected because of their knowledge or wide experience. They have authority, and their authority rests upon their mastery of knowledge and skills in a particular field. Followers turn to them and accept them as authority because they have demonstrated mastery of the field. This type of leadership truly leads people ,

while authority based upon position is likely only to drive people. Educated youth who return to their villages and a vocation, ex-servicemen who settle down in their home village after retirement and other who maintain close contact with their home village, influence and lead the village to a marked degree. In some villages, resident school teachers also exercise considerable influence over the villagers. The second one is a political and social type of leadership. This comprises the large number of political and social workers who have chosen the village as their venue of work.

After Independence, with the establishment of village panchayats and the growth of the cooperative movement and the rural extension programme, a new type of leadership has evolved in rural India which appears to be replacing the traditional types of leadership. This type of leadership is changing in consonance with the democratic ideals and way of life. The traditional leaders still exercise a large measure of influence on the villages, and the villages in turn respect and need them. There are many cases in which a landlord or a money lender has become a Sarpanch or a director of the cooperative society. There are local leaders or potential leaders in every community. These leaders are often in key positions, yet they are not trusted with assignments in the fear of appropriation. (p. 337-38)

Problems in approaching local leaders arise in relation to particular groups, organisations and specific situations. It is impracticable to attempt to present a rule of thumb that is sure to work in all cases. One great problem lies in finding local leaders in a village. Finding leaders might seem to imply that the agent is going out to discover

the born leader or person who has the traits needed to a leader. These leaders often deny that they are leaders, but they are often in key positions. These leaders are also called opinion leaders. They are valuable means of reaching many people.

It has been experienced that the acknowledged traditional leaders are usually self-centred, jealous of their positions and decline to cooperate with other potential leaders. These leaders are also autocratic in their behaviour. Any approach to them must take into consideration the situation and the level where they are. These leaders, though friendly towards extension, may be viewed that they are antagonistic and fostering their vested interests in themselves which is always widely exploitative (pp.348-9).

Tarlok Singh's (1969)²⁴ book, 'Towards an Integrated Society', is a Voluminous and comprehensive Scholarly piece of work, by ^{any} standard. Singh, however, emphasised weaknesses in economic management and in administrative and political leadership, at the onset. Singh accepts, village as the root at which economic movements would be started correcting all its relative axes which are largely appertaining to village Panchayat. The village in which the old panchayat flourished was a more or less static society with few economic links beyond the nearest market town or fair.

Local democratic institutions, which are now being established in most States, are as much a product of faith as they are of the logic of a scheme of national development with and through

the people. It must be admitted that they are exceedingly difficult set of institutions to operate. The relationships between institutions at different levels and between public servants and non-official representatives who participate in the functioning are still far from clearly defined. There are areas of overlap and conflict in jurisdiction and functions. There is considerable scope for quarrelling over shadows. The nature of authority and of obligations may not always be clear and both may be understood or distorted. Singh notes that the Scheduled castes and other backward classes in the villages are in the main economically dependant group. To a large extent, they remain socially a non-integrated group in the rural community.

Singh, in brief, noted that significant leadership resources are latent in most communities. Potential leaders are held back frequently from lack of knowledge and lack of resources. These are the two elements which plans at the national and state levels should seek specially to provide. Few investments will yield longer results than the training of leaders and workers at the community level(p.480).

P.S. Mathur (1978)²⁵ comes up with the practice of public opinion. He writes, "But public opinion is not found in vacuum. It presupposes a certain social, economic and political context. This context is the same which democracy requires for its successful functioning. There must be a widespread literacy among

the people. For without literacy there does not take place that circulation of intellectual and cultural ideas which broaden the mental horizon of the people. It is not contended that mere literacy would pulverize what Walter Bagehot, in his *Physics and Politics* called, the cake of the custom nearly a century ago. However, literacy is likely to loosen its grip appreciably so as to open at least a few windows in, and what Professor Popper calls, a Closed Society. Therefore, in some of the newly emerged nations of Asia and Africa, with the incubus of almost universal literacy, we have a very uncongenial soil for the growth of public opinion in any sense of the term."

Then the people must possess a certain homogeneity. By this is not meant that people must belong to the same race, profess the same religion and speak the same language. All that is necessary is that people should feel that, in spite of these differences, they have a common destiny. For in the absence of this feeling what we would find would not be public opinion but eddies of caste, creed and even linguistic opinions. Closely allied to this is widespread spirit of social equality or fraternity. For, without this there would ^{be} created strong social barriers which would, naturally, limit the range of public opinion.

Then there is necessary a certain economic democracy. By this he means merely a widespread diffusion of property and the

absence of extremes of wealth and poverty. (p.92). Another essential is the existence of a party system. Parties are not only the incubators of public opinion but also its brokers.

Finally, there must be present a widespread spirit of nonviolence. After all the formation and efficacy of public opinion depend upon the existence of an atmosphere of persuasion rather than of pressure or force. The onslaught of violence in a country would mean reading the funeral oration of democracy.

F.G. Bailey (1963)²⁶ considered mass political participation to be insignificant and of abject quality and traced it to the peoples severe illiteracy and cultural backwardness. To be acceptable to his voters a candidate needs a reputation for two things, first for being wholeheartedly interested in his constituency and ready to put its welfare before that of the larger community, Secondly, for being a forceful and influential person (what is in Orissa called a good fighter'). The demand for a person with evident parochial loyalties means that in all but a very few cases, the candidates are natives at least of the district and usually of the constituency for which they stand. The criterion of a 'good fighter' or an influential man is measured partly by qualifications, and partly by past performance. These are the ideas which the candidates would like public opinion in their constituencies to hold about them.

A candidate has 'ascribed' support through his local affiliations and through his caste membership. It will be noticed that the former ties between candidate and voter belong immediately to the traditional social structure, while the latter, *prima facie* at least, are groups and networks of relationship created. Whatever his party, and whatever the programme he stands for, a candidate hopes to get the support of his fellow-villagers and the villagers from his own locality, because they know him and they can touch with him to do favours for them, and they can get in name of this village is involved in his victory or defeat.

There are structural facts which make it difficult and dangerous for a candidate to rely on too greatly or too openly on caste loyalties to get his votes for him. In all except the tribal constituencies, no one caste comes anywhere near constituting a majority of the electorate, so that their support alone can not win an election. Secondly, as with the village, too close an identification with one caste will automatically line up other castes against a candidate. Thirdly, castes, like villages, are commonly split into factions, and to gain one faction is to lose the other. Fourthly, Orissa, upto the present there is little evidence of widespread caste organisations. (p. 105).

The main function of a party at election times is to provide a team of workers, who will persuade the undecided voter or the apathetic sympathiser to come to the polling booth and put his vote in the right box. In the absence of mass-media this role in making a mass contact and, indeed in political education

should be of particular importance. (p. 107).

But while the general public may be indifferent to or sceptical about, the activities and record of the party, and the values for which it stands, there is a core of active people who ^{act} in the parties ^{for} a chance of personal reward. Many are seeking an appointment for themselves or their relatives- usually a minor appointment - in government service, for example as a schoolmaster or a peon. Others want loans or grants for the development of their village school or to excavate a well. Others, less altruistic, want the contract to carry out the work. Some want a licence for trading in controlled commodities. Others have lost their job and want to be reinstated. These are few examples selected from the reports of Election Tribunals inquiring into complaints of corrupt practice and intimidation.

Similarly, A.C. Mayer(1963)²⁷ has shown distinctive political behaviours of people and the political parties. He extensively deals with special aspects, candidates personal qualification, their relations to the town's social configuration, the specific influences exerted by politicians on individual voters and influence of the elections on the internal structure of the parties.

The first election held first time after independence in 1954 was won by Praja Socialist Party (P.S.P.) winning eleven seats to Congress's three. The main reason for this victory of P.S.P

was a lathi charge a few months before, at the demonstration organized by the P.S.P. against the shortage of grain. Congress was held responsible for the use of force, traumatic to the town which had hardly known the struggle for independence. In 1957 both parties won the same number of seats, and an uneasy regime followed. The chairman, who held a casting vote, was chosen by lot for the first three years. In the fourth chairman's election, however, congress managed to detach a P.S.P. member and elected its chairman by a majority vote. At the time of 1961 election, then, congress controlled the Municipality by winning fourteen seats to two for the P.S.P.

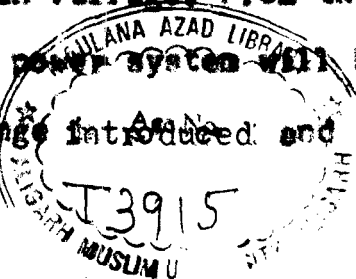
What is most important for the present purpose is what the factors were behind this victory, besides parties' election tricks and secret policies. However, the factors won victory to congress are of two kinds. One, roughly, was the obligation to the candidate, or his workers, which could be 'cashed' for vote. The second kind involves less the cashing of obligation than the manipulation of favourable relationships. By these are meant the ties of caste, kinship, common residence, or simply friendship. In each ward there were localities in which particular castes predominated. But in no ward was election said to be possible on the vote of a single caste. The average poll in Dewas is 65 percent, which means that such a caste would have to compromise 35 per cent or 22 per cent respectively. The former figure was said to be never, and the latter rarely reached. Even if, it were,

it was said to be impossible to get every single member to the poll, and to ensure that such a vote was one of absolutely solid support. It is significant, however, that in four wards the Muslim community provided over 33 per cent of voters, the highest proportion reaching 47 per cent, and therefore in theory elect a man single-handed. There is no record of this having occurred in 1961 or any other year, but the point is important in view of the communal issues raised during the election campaign.

In his "Election Campaign in India, M.V. Pylee⁷⁸ argues that with the bulk of the people illiterate, the written word has its severe limitations. Hence in Indian political scene they more or less belong to the world of unreality. What makes them somewhat real is the campaign. (p.136). As a result, all the political parties vied with one another in exploiting communal caste, linguistic, regional and parochial passions. The exploitation of nonpolitical sentiment has indeed robbed the entire campaign of a great deal of its value as a process of mass political education. Therefore a village headman is still a force to be reckoned with, and caste, communal, or denominational feeling has still a deep-seated emotional content. A candidate who wins over the village headman can normally carry with him a sizeable proportion of the village electorate, if not the whole. Similarly, a candidate who appeals to the rural voter in the name of the caste to which he belongs makes an immediate impact in his favour. Religious affiliation, too, has a similar role to play.

He argues that Political Science is wrong to picture the citizen as the centre of power wresting certain abstract, unconditional and costless rights of man from the State that becomes the focus of class struggle for dominance in both external and internal relations. The unhappy political experience has been that neither security nor liberty nor peace is hereby safeguarded leading to chronic resentment, fear, anxiety, and creation of new social and economic rights in a vicious circle. (p.11)

Yogendra Singh²⁹ in his another writing, *Changing Power Structure of Village Community - A case study of six village in Eastern U.P.* pinpointedly emphasised that the upper castes (Rajputs, Brahmins, Bhumihar) and classes (ex-landlords and moneylenders) continue to hold powers in villages. Increased competition for power has been energised from the section of lower castes and class groups on an organized basis. This tendency is relatively more true for the caste groups rather than class groups. The secular democratic value system which had been anticipated to work as the basis of the new power system of village, has not as yet succeeded in finding acceptance or root in the rural value system and social structure. The village polity still continues to be deeply affected and determined by the pattern of economic deprivations and privileges of the various castes and classes. The power system has a tendency to incline in favour of the groups who can control the economic expectations of the people in village. From this point, power, any future dynamics of rural power system will be in direct response to the economic change introduced and the pattern of rural economic growth (pp 667-685).



... While, A.R.³⁰Desai believes that the rural life of India is undergoing transformation under the impact of government measures. The types of changes that are taking place have been narrated in their broadest outline. What will be the direction and tempo of these changes, the democratic political objective fit in with the newly emerging class and social antagonisms in rural India ? will the rural social life experience another round of tensions and antagonisms? Can these contradictions be resolved without changing the very motif and mode of production . What institution at transformation will be required to establish both economic prosperity and social harmony in the rural life ? These are some of the fundamental questions posed before all social scientists .

The rural change that is generated by the government measures is tending to sharpen the contradiction among various classes in the rural society and in the context of caste and other institutional background is slowly unleashing tensions, antagonisms and collisions, the implications of which have to be properly comprehended if the direction of the development of one-fifth of mankind is to be assessed and influenced (pp. 702-714).

Partap C. Aggarwal(1971)³¹ understands that the introduction of Panchayati Raj appearing as one of the major changes brought about by the changes at the national level guaranteed representation for the scheduled castes. For the first time in the history of

Chevandi Kalan, the Neo Muslims shared political power with the lower castes. The Chamars of Chevandi Kalan took advantage of the favourable provisions of the law and increased their effective representation by electing a Brahman from their ward, and by nominating a Chamar under the guarantee clause. Because of adult suffrage, larger caste groups got a real opportunity to gain political power, and the degree of interest in the panchayat elections evinced by various castes reflected their view of this change. The Neos being the losers virtually ignored the panchayat in the first election and showed interest in it in the second time. The Chamars remained a solid bloc in both the elections and took keen interest. All Kamin castes tried to use the right to vote judiciously and in calculated way.

Various castes in Chevandi Kalan changed their behaviour patterns in order to consolidate their gains in economic and political power. The Brahman toned down their observance of ritual purity to such an extent that one of them openly lived with a low caste woman, and another was marrying the Harijans as their pyrohit. The lower castes, such as Chamars, showed a tendency towards greater Sanskritization. The Neos who were the biggest losers responded to the change by turning Islam their adopted religion. They realised that their privileged position could no longer be preserved by their observance of Hindu rituals, since their monopoly of landownership was lost and their political power greatly reduced (pp. 221-222).

C.P. Bhambhri in his book *Politics in India-1947-1987* (1988)³² argues that India is highly a politicised society. It is building a capitalist society on the basis of a good number of contributing factors- caste being the prime one. During all the eight elections held for the Lok Sabha, caste-based candidates came to fight on behalf of the Congress Party. Therefore these candidates capacity to win the election was judged by the support that they were likely to receive on account of caste loyalties-caste being an ideology in mass mobilization for political support in elections. B.J.P. is an example besides the congress. Caste and religion have become a powerful divisive force in politics due to the lack of democratic ideology and values in the Indian political parties. As a result, social violence in the rural and urban areas is increasing because of the want of protection of the poor against the exploitative forces gripping the state apparatus. (pp. 204-237).

Whereas Pauline Kolenda (1984)³³ in his *Caste in contemporary India: Beyond Organic Solidarity*, "says, "Caste can not be abolished in India, and to attempt it would be one of the most hazardous operations that was ever performed in a political body. As a religious institution caste will die, as a social institution, it will live and improve (Max Muller 1869: 353)".

However Kolenda spots three stages in the relationship between caste and politics, and quotes Rajni Kothari. The first stage contains involvement of politicisation/^{or} a powerful elite caste, usually one which responded earliest to the opportunities

for western education, The Brahmins in Maharashtra and Tamilnadu, the Kayasthas in Bihar are its examples. The second stage contains factionalism and fragmentation taking place within the competing castes and the development of multi-caste and multi-factional alignments. Lower castes are often brought into support high caste leaders and to strengthen a faction. The final stage (third) is that caste identity tends to languish with the progress in education, urbanisation and the development of an orientation towards individual achievement and modern status symbols. Individuals participate in networks which include persons of several castes.

In his another book, Halfway to Equality, Pratap C. Aggarwal (1993)³⁴ brought out a good number of case studies of Harijans of various positions- students, bureaucrat, Govt. officials educators, Scientists and professionals, doctors and political leaders. None of these informants is reported to be satisfied with the reservation quota or other concessions which seem to them disproportionate to their numerical strength. But it is generally held that 'special privileges are provided to the people belonging to scheduled castes to bring about equality in the society. But fact lies that 'White collar workers, especially government employees, know this particularly well. Many in this class of people believe that what is given to the Harijans is taken from them; especially jobs and scholarships, some of them complain bitterly and call the Harijans sons - in law of the government. The popular discontent of the Harijans is that the Harijan political leaders are not of much help

in the event of Harijan crisis-caste feuds. There was a caste feud, legal suit in the court which dragged nearly a decade and became a fair cause of Harijan sufferings in economic depression. This has ultimately led some to decoity. Decoits were treacherously arrested by the police and suit started where great help from political quarters was needed badly. There was a Harijan M.P. who stunted help by hiding himself from behind the herbs because he could not ignore mass political support to be further needed in the forth coming elections. Fact therefore occurs that votes become more important to these leaders than the cause of their own caste fellows. This proves that political representation has limited value for the Harijan people, (p-11). Because the Harijan leaders become less useful once they become elected - whoever the leader is even Babu Jagjivan Ram or even Rameshwaras (p.215).

In Pressure groups in Indian Politics : Babulal Fadia; (1980)³⁵ holds that Politics in India is pre-eminently the politics of pressure groups rather than the political parties. The Indian model of pressure group contains its specific features :

1. Caste, community, religion, region etc. determining Indian politics formed an important characteristic of pressure group, caste groups being the 'Sovereigns without crowns'.
2. Most of the associational groups, like trade various, students organisations, peasant unions, labour syndicate etc. are dominated and controlled by political parties as being parties behind the parties'.

3. Para-military groups, like the RSS, Jamet-e-Islami, Shiv Sena, Gopal Sena, Farun Sena, on the political landscape are organised by political parties to protect their interests.
4. Organised lobbies, which prevented nationalisation of rice trade and opposed nationalisation of other foodgrains, including wheat, grew into All India Foodgrain Dealers Associations made the government frame its policy in March 1974.
5. Interested states sometimes play a role of pressure groups by means of their liaison officer at Delhi for contacting with the representative in parliament for the purpose of lobbying intensively.
6. Organised groups are encouraged by some state Govts. to enlist their support against the Centre in order to seek approval of establishment of more universities greater investment by the Centre in the states, location of steel plant and refineries etc.
7. A chaos is created by the institutional pressure groups in the Indian political system.
8. Foreign lobbies do also have influence on the govt. over foreign aid and technical skill.
9. Mass movements, rallies, strikes, violence are the instruments used by anomic or associational groups to press their demands in India.
10. Organised groups largely influence the administrators to the level of policy implementation. In order to seek favourable access on a caste basis, local organised groups sometimes bribe local officials handling the implementation task.
11. The role of pressure groups is critical, and supposed to prevent govt. from doing thing in the public interest.

12. Most of the pressure groups have adopted a mental attitude towards the political parties.

However, these scholars have pinpointed each and every walk of political life in India and have arrived at certain conclusions about the political behaviour of Indian people activating in different social situations. Their findings and conclusions along with the thrilling interactions of individuals of highly typical nature and attitudes often allure one who is deeply interested, in and having profound zeal, for research. The present task may be considered as the break-through of these phenomena. Keeping in view all the above discussed phenomena relating to all social economic, cultural religious, educational and political matters, the present study has been undertaken to study the factors and phenomena which are moulding political behaviour of individuals in a different social situation.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

(Introduction)

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CHAPTER - II

RESEARCH, FIELD SITUATION AND METHODS: FIELD OF RESEARCH

Research :

This study is mainly concerned with a 10,000 Muslim population living in an area I studied known as Sahabanchek. Also this area is inhabited by 5,000 Hindu folk in a predominantly Muslim environment. Muslim predominance over Hindus was not only marked by their numerical strengths, but also by almost all other counts- social, economic and political. In fact, the degree of social, economic and political participation of Social beings determines their social statuses. Therefore, a man's status is known by the degree of his participation in those affairs. For instance, a sum of donation by a person given to certain religious or political or cultural organisation is an index of how much his status is high. His status is also determined by how often he is called to settle village-level disputes.

As for economic participation by the Muslims, it is a precondition of acquiring a prestigious position in the society. However, till a few decades ago, economic activity of the whole Muslim population was based on agriculture. This includes a sole reason that the Muslims held vast amounts of land compared to the Hindus. All the more, the Muslims used, to be the employers of the Hindus, because most of the agricultural work was performed on the basis of purchased labour allowed by the neighbouring Hindu population.

The phenomenon of purchase and sale of labour vested a wrong notion in this landholding class about employment. By employment they hardly meant more than some menial labour which might bring a similar amount of wages to what agriculture gives of to a wage earner. Therefore, the importance and utility of education as the base of employment in outside world could only appeal a few individuals of the whole Muslim population. This indicates low education among the Muslims, being the real cause of extremely little number of Muslims in Government jobs.

This relates itself to post independence^{ncc} phenomenon. The phenomenon is about a popular complaint of the whole Muslim community that they are discriminated against in matters of employment, & employment is not provided to Muslims in equitable manners, and that they are deprived of their constitutional rights to employment. Generalisations derived by certain studies may apply elsewhere in the country or the state, but the deep illiteracy among the Muslims in the area under study left no scope for the operation of discrimination and deprivation process to that extent. Its real cause is not far to seek; extremely flourishing agriculture, profound dignity and prestige in the inside world, did never make them feel the real want or necessity of such a 'golami'.^{R1}

R1. Golami is a derogatory term used to denote employment which, according to the villagers, could be no better than agricultural work, rather inferior to, corresponding to slavery.

Necessity of political participation by the Muslims emerged after the partition of the country in 1947. Many post-independence studies have witnessed a sense or feeling of insecurity among the Muslims in the Hindu predominant environment in the wider context. On the pretext of their homeland in East and West Pakistan, the Muslims always feel severe fear of being driven out from this country towards the 'so-called' homeland. For this reason or the other, nearly 10 per cent Muslims from Sahabanchak migrated to Pakistan, and a large number shifted to some places within the state beset with vast number ^{of} Muslim population ensuring guarantee of human life and property. In view of such a dismaying situation, the remaining population found a third way to crusade against all ruinous attacks expected any moment on life and property-taking active part in political affairs. By taking part in political affairs they meant sending representatives to the Panchayat to the greatest extent and to the State assembly and the Parliament to a lower extent. Thus, the prevailing fact suggests that power is the key variable in social life of the Sahabanchak people.

In social life of people of Sahabanchak what I found points to certain other variables relating to inter-communal relations and harmonization in almost all walks of life. It looks certainly little contradictory in view of the fact that there was a fear among Muslims of being driven out from the country. For clarity, I tried to enquire into this matter and came to know that the Hindus who are harmoniously cooperating them and are serving them in the fields are not among those who really want to oust them,

but this danger may emerge to them from those quite unknown to and geographically remote from them. But what practically prevailed in the locality is a real communal harmony which was often proved by their amity, cooperation and sympathy they exchanged in socio-cultural occasions in order to augment and better their social and economic ties. For example, marriage being one of those occasions often costs too much to be easily borne by a village poor, and that he has to borrow money of others higher up. The village landlord who was erst while most served by the poor often came to his rescue. There may be included so many other things, like purchase of a piece of land or homestead, employment on pursuance, matrimonial coordination etc, which all ensured immense mutual cooperation between the Hindus and the Muslims at the village level in exchange for a promise of being attended in need which is now often political.

Political need is also satisfied by other social ties, such as kinship. Kinship containing greater importance of family and lineage plays an important part to reap political gains. Political ideology is often superseded by kinship and family ties, but as well, such ties are broken on the basis of piques between kin groups. Ties are also broken by the predominance of political ideology and that the kins are seen to be fighting each other in the political arena. But this kinship stands in good stead where the party fighting with one's kinsmen is not politically so prominent as the party belongs to other religious group. Thus the political importance and awareness is not dominant, and therefore, the Muslims seek their fortunes in terms of those things which

have discussed in some detail in the foregoing and in the succeeding four chapters.

THE FIELD SITUATION :

Collection of the entire bulk of data required my three visits to Sahabanchak. The first visit was given during the February-March of 1986, the second visit was during the June-July of 1987 and the third visit was during the June-July of 1988. During these periods I stayed at my house situated in Sahabanchak. Though one of the major reasons why I chose Sahabanchak as my field of study was my local acquaintance and linguistic privilege, this fact, in fact, made me feel shy and hesitant at my initial ventures of contacting and interrogating individuals for their replies on such a sensitive research problem. Though such a feeling on the part of a researcher hailing from the discipline of Sociology was quite unlikely, yet I can not ignore the fact that my previous field work experiences did come to my rescue much after the local situations had grappled ^{with} my mind so tightly.

The initial difficulties I envisaged emerged from the fact that my frame of reference was considered to be just corresponding to the task I was assigned to. Both, Hindus and Muslims in the field perceive it on communal grounds. Hindus considered the task to be my devotion to my religion and religious community; probably, they thought that a Muslim Youth being trained in a Muslim fundamentalist environment, like Aligarh, which was no superior to a medieval maktab used to be situated in mosques,¹ was almost

me
 compelled to undertake such enterprises. Such a view was not only popular among the uneducated Hindus, but also it was equally popular as an accepted truth among the educated and highly educated ones. During the course of my first series of investigation on the basis of standardised schedule. I used to be called as 'mullah', 'Jamet-e-Islam Chela' (disciple of Jamet-e-Islam-e-Hind) etc. And therefore, I started being deserted and dissociated from usual gatherings.

However, accomplishment of my task became more difficult day by day, and increasing difficulties, for this sole reason, made me more tenacious of having wide access to my target-groups. During the difficulties I was envisaging, there was a sound feeling in my mind that I must not tarnish and obscure the sanctity of the role of the University I hailed from, in particular, and all the research institutions of the world in general. Thus, my tenacity vested in me a sense of academic responsibility to convince them of what an institution, such as Aligarh Muslim University or Benares Hindu University was like, and a research under the discipline of Sociology was-whether or not associated with a Muslim or a Hindu nomenclature. At present, I do not want to propel my success that both Hindus and Muslims become convinced of the non-communal purpose of my visits, but the fact lies that most of who had taken me for a fanatic or communalist or even a fundamentalist had cooperated me to their possible extent, and a large number of them even accompanied me to engage informants and respondents, for my investigation.

I was much more embarrassed by the Muslim respondents for a number of reasons. Firstly, considering my task to be wholly communal, their sense of so-called secularism gave wide birth to my slight approach towards them. My humble submission for their views on the problem at hand tremendously vexed them, and that many including a number of highly educated ones holding high positions, like High School teaching, reacted to in an unusual manner. While collecting views and opinions from village intelligentsia in a High School, one teacher (in his mid-50s) holding Honours M.A. and B.Ed. degrees held a copy of schedule and suddenly brought me to bay by scornfully asking me "aata diye kee hawbe" (what purpose will be served by it ?). I took no offence, because the person was quite known to me for years in matters of his social, economic and political roles and role-playing in the changed and fastly changing circumstances. Thus, my thrilling job was priced with so many such instances of snarl^{and}/sneer.

Another source of difficulty arose from the college-educated youth who never visited any large institution like Aligarh Muslim University. They often compare^{are} one that had little similar features with mine. Taking a very honest stand in this regard, I tried to convince them of the one they suggested as equal to mine was as too inferior an institution to mine as went beyond comparison. To my suggestion their nakedly imbolished reaction struck me much of being considered ^{are} as unusually concited over my learning seat. Such a reaction led to me to a change

in my notion about the general field situation I would confront and I also started avoiding extraneous discussions at least as far as practicable or just giving vague explanations.

People at the middle-range education known to me on all apparent counts, like, their native village, family, kinship, parentage, landholding, social position, education and political linkages, manipulated their replies aboveboard simply because of my precise knowledge in them. (This is more a psychological phenomenon than sociological.) This phenomenon, however, perpetrated upon my mind and claimed much labour to verify them. Sometimes, some took up a schedule enthusiastically and knowingly inserted in it irrelevant and false answers which latter proved of no avail. Notwithstanding, I failed to inhibit him in view of his position and dignity in the gathering collected around. Some was found more embarrassing in putting words into my respondent's mouth. I might employ P.V. Young's² caution to guard against such falsifications and fabrications, but I averted, because the point he was dealing with was already clear to me. Many showing enough capability of properly and precisely filling in a schedule framed in English committed etymological, spelling and grammatical mistakes, which ultimately proved equivocal and /or untrue. But they were much satisfied with their command in English language.^(R2) Yet some others

R2. While scrutinizing my data-Tables, Prof. André Betelle asked me why I did not frame the Schedule in Bengali. As I already realized in the field my mistake, I admittedly requested his suggestions which I made use of in my subsequent visits to the field.

I met case out more interesting. They conceded to my request and held up a copy of schedule, went through it in silence and returned it to me and went away with a promise of his prompt return to me, and no longer turned up.

My familiarity to the length and breadth of Sahabenchak caused substantial wastage of time. Knowledge of people I was known to in matters of morning preparation in all basic needs, like food, bath and rest etc., for the day-long time, often insisted me upon agreeing with them in satisfying those needs in their hospitality. Therefore, I at times got to find at the dead end of the day, that I could hardly make in my daily register any more number of respondents met than my host's himself. Despite, it was not possible on my part to overlook and turn down their earnestness and imploration. This had a clear ground of snobbery which was mis calculated over a youth, like me just trying to fish an avenue out from the troubled waters to make both the ends meet.

Frequently, I was faced with a number of questions raised by the respondents and curious village-folk about how much I earned, who or what was I sent by or when I was appointed to this position. Their conception about the nature of work I took, up was no better than the village children's explaining to others enquiring of what I was doing as 'lok gonone' (General Census). Therefore, my true answers to their questions never satisfied their preconceived notion. Many unbelievably asked me to 'bring out a cigarette' or

'make order for tea at the cost of public funds.' The cost of cigarette^a or tea cost me little compared to that cost my mental labour and time spent on convincing them of the fact about my task and academic position

A number of individuals among my respondents showed deep interest in my work. They rather wished to correct my methodological strategies than to provide correct information. I was quite stupefied by their illogical and irrelevant guiding principles and advices. The fact that they all knew me well of all my affairs and bestowed on me certain cost-free academic insights earlier involved two important outlooks. One is that they all sustained a sense of inferiority which they always wished to clothe in their untrue knowledgeableness and command in whatever subject approached them. Another is the fact that they regarded themselves as the local intelligentsia. By reason of this conception about themselves, they felt that their ideas about anything, academic research, political affairs, or social, cultural educational activities, would be always prayed for in warmth and ecstasy. That is why they also allowed to me their unstinted help and cooperation with regard to reorienting and revising my research design. All the more, I became rather perplexed by one respondent who drew up a mistake that he said to be committed in the Schedule. He was a teacher in a Jr. High School and seemed to have earlier earned a name for his command in English. It is question, do you know, the term 'little' much always be preceded by the article 'a'? Struck me must more than he might satisfy his own motto of fault - finding or his ecclolism.

In the well-known surroundings, my frequent and sudden visits gained access to Sahabenchak people at any place they were located. They could be contacted while returning from agricultural field, gossiping in restaurant, or home-wards, doing domestic work within their homestead, preparing feed for animals, bathing children in the road side community pump, and everywhere including their respective work places. It is very interesting to note that in modern dresses my visits to their agricultural work-place quite attached to their house used to be initially surmised as a source of attack on their agricultural economy, and that, many from beyond a kenning distance were found hiding themselves behind shorter trees or bushes than they properly could. This phenomenon did not last much, but they often recalled that heart-felt fear as soon as I fell at their sight in pant, shirt and shoes with a bundle of papers (Schedules) either in hands or in armpit. In view of this fact about them I learned from a village literate youth, I began to clothe myself in pyjama-korta or in Korta-lungi. On trips to these consternated folk, and started being received cordially from a sound distance. Therefore, I was for good abandoned from hearing children's noise, 'police'! 'police'! 'police'! ('run away', 'run away'!).

83. Since a few months ago, efforts on the part of the State Govt. (C.P.(I)M.) were being made to guard against exploitation of agricultural labourers. The landowning farmers were also conciliated to pay them their need-based wages, and Govt. officials sometimes visited the fields to enquire after whether or not the labourers were being paid accordingly.

Nonetheless, a number of persons proved to be a source of disgust and annoyance. I had to face in every part of Sahabanchak that contain persons interviewed a day or two ago came in and/or on my way to persuade me in replacing their earlier views and opinions noted in my note book or in the Schedule by the new ones they were ready to present. Fact is that such individuals after being interviewed might have consulted others and came to know their views, and were convinced of their mistake and its consequences- often due as they themselves believed. Or, they themselves thought and inculcated upon their answers. Now they realised that these answers- whatever true or false- should not have been given. However, on the site I was bound to agree with them so that the engaged respondents might not drift away. But in most cases, I had to take pains to placate them in their present condition. Once, I suddenly found that a single individual came to me thrice in order to change his views of certain different aspects. This phenomenon prevailed in the length and breadth of Sahabanchak until I packed up my research bundles for the last time.

Research Methods :

The entire bulk of data was collected with the help of three research tools and techniques, viz. Schedule, group-interview and participant observation. I could make use of these techniques invariably in most rural sites I had been to. At the sight of my

neering to the rural folk of all age-groups including children, adults and old-age crowded me to explain their economic and political grievances and sufferings which devolved on them from their neighbours, or Govt. officials or political 'goondas'. This feature of Sahabanchak geared up my data-collection, on one hand, and put me to labour a day for a longer period than I wished to do wholeheartedly. Even my presence and working at one place lasted for about 12 hours, and even then I found many returning unseid and unattended.

When I found that even such long periods in my working proved insufficient to talk to all people prepared to have their say, soon I discovered a flaw in my approach. This was related to the schedule containing a large number of questions that consumed much more time than one who laid wait for a turn could easily remain patient for. As long as this shortcoming appeared in my notice, I devised another way to reach them all present in the gatherings. I held a small-sized note-book and started asking those questions which recieved no same or similar answers, I dropped those questions to which the whole collection gave the same or similar replies. This device, however, eased my task to a sound degree, and soon I found that I could cover a much larger number of individuals than I could do earlier. This, in fact, made to me another ease to engage larger number. Previously, dog-busy people retressed because of the much time-consuming a Schedule of mine. Now the absence of the bulky bundle of schedules from me generated immense enthusiasm among people. Thus, both ways I benifitted by the new device.

My engaging people for interview was much eased by my familial and lineal reputation throughout the surroundings of Sahabanchak. It proved highly useful in the case of those who knew me little and my family, kinship ties and lineage much. In those cases, I was most cordially received, and cooperated in not only gathering information, but also in checking and cross-checking the views provided by their neighbours. Another feature in the area that was produced to me by the reputation was that certain villagers of all ages were pulled out to me from either their sleep or rest, or domestic chores. This was a little pinching scene to me, and that I convinced them that it was better to catch hold of the respondents at their natural places, so that they might not distort their views in agony caused by drags. I could convince last of all, and felt relieved much more than those ^{be} ceased to _{dragged or pulled.}

My intention to cover more and more inhabitants of Sahabanchak was fulfilled in another way which was paved for my walks by Sahabanchak people themselves. Their deep sense of hospitality often stubbornly dragged me in for a lunch, and I found that their hosting me cost too much of my time. While on the lunch-mat, I found that serving food was assisted by women from behind the purdah. Women were shy but candid, who recently knew my whereabouts parentage, etc, and sent through the males certain enquiries about myself. This way I confronted many times a single enquiry whether I got married. Listening to my negative reply they were taken aback, and this way they were conversed with, observed and interrogated

from my own research point of view. This was the only way, I could lighten the number of female respondents, and could be assured of their unhesitant appearance and unprotected conversations.

It was found that my local acquaintance put / ^{an} easy-feeling before some respondents to become more frank and friendly in speaking out facts and truths relating to their social, economic and political organisations. I found a number of respondents who grew so emotional and teared that they could hardly prevent themselves from shedding tears with frequent throes and sobs. I nodded my head and felt touched of their shock and showed sympathy for them to the best possible extent. I made use of this heart-rending scene and atmosphere in another way. I considered that a person deeply plunged in shock and sorrow did not naturally insinuate or leer other's misfortune, and therefore, started verifying the views of others, well-known to them as close neighbours. My religious belongingness mattered in two ways in the field-one was with my Muslim respondents and another with my Hindu respondents. Muslims knowing me to be Muslim sometimes struck me by their frivolous opinions regarding Hindu-Muslim relationship and social harmony. Much of the thing they said to me emerged as some sort of complaint and hatred which ultimately asserted that communal unrest sprang anywhere in the country from the minds of the leaders of the so-called Hindu chauvenism. On the other hand, my religious aspect made my Hindu respondents little hesitant for a little period but were convinced soon after I asked to know whether the views and opinions given on certain general phenomena, like education, income, fertility etc. by the Muslim respondents were true. Thus they took me for a man whom

they should not be afraid of and provided me. all they knew about them with certain village slangs, like, 'khooo peji lok', 'khooo ohelo munush' etc.(very bad man; very good man). This way, I also extracted from them their own views on the problem at hand.

However, by all the above means and ways it was made possible to undertake 464 individuals from among the total numerical strength of the Muslim population 10,000 and 54 individuals from among the total population of the Hindus, 5,000, in this area. Besides, it was possible on my part to have close looks at the whole area as well. As a result, I could reach the covert aspects of individual life and activity which was somehow appertained to their political behaviour in fastly changing political scenario. Although, the data collected from and on the Hindu folk are not much obvious in this study, yet I could properly make use of in matters of checking and cross-checking of the replies provided by the Muslim respondents and informants. Sometimes, the Muslims were asked certain questions in view of what the Hindus had already said, and that this trick proved prolific ^{to} guard against Muslims giving wrong information and vague explanation.

Malda District :

Malda district in which Sahabanchak, the present field of empirical research activities exists, lies between 24° 30' and 25° 32'N. and 87° 46' and 88° 31'E. covering an area of 4864 sq.kms. which is bounded on the North-western corner by West Dinajpur district and on the North-eastern by Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. The Ganges

forms a continuous Western and South-western boundary separating it from Murshidabad district and the Santhal Parganas of Bihar.

The Mahananda flows through the district from North to South dividing it into two nearly equal parts which present very different characteristics. West of the river the surface is composed of the newer alluvial and is comparatively low, a great deal of it having been subject fluvial action. The Ganges once washed the walls of Gour, but it now flows 25 kms. further west. The Eastern half of the district lies in the older alluvial of the Jarind, and has a stiff clay soil and high undulating surface, broken by the deep valleys of Tengan and Burnabhaba and their tributary streams. The Ganges skirts the district, forming a natural boundary from the North-west to the extreme South. Its flood-waters, as deflected from the hills of Rajmahal, are perpetually cutting away the Malda bank, which is everywhere low and composed of loose sand. Among many former channels and deserted back-waters the little winding stream of the Bhagirathi deserves mention, as being the historical river-bed which defended the city of Gour. This is almost dry in the winter. It ultimately joins the Pagla, a larger branch of the Ganges which runs in a meandering course to the South-east, and encloses, before it regains in the Ganges, a large ^{is} island about 25 kms. long. At certain seasons of the year, the melting of the snows in the mountains, combined with the local rainfall, causes the river to rise as much as 30 feet, and an embankment has been constructed just above the civil station of English Bazar to protect it from inundation. There are no lakes ; but old channels of the Ganges are numerous, and between Gour and the

the Mahananda there are extensive undrained swamps.

The district is covered with alluvium. The Berind belongs to an older alluvial formation, which is usually composed of massive argillaceous beds of a rather pale reddish-brown blue, often weathering yellowish, disseminated throughout which occur kankar and pisolitic ferruginous concretions. The low-lying country to the west of the Mahananda and in the South is of more recent formation, consisting of sandy clay and sand along the course of the rivers, and of fine silt consolidating into clay in the flatter parts of the river plain.

Where the ground is not occupied by the usual crops of North Bengal, it is covered with an abundant natural vegetation, except in the sandy beds of the greater rivers. Old river-beds, however, ponds and marshes, and streams with a sluggish current have a copious vegetation of Vallisneria and other plants. Land subject to inundation has usually a covering of Tamarix and reedy grasses, and in some parts where the ground is more or less marshy Rose involucrata is plentiful. Near villages thickets or shrubberies of semi-spontaneous growth and more or less useful trees of a rapid growth and weedy character are common.

The climate of the district is not characterised by extremes of heat or rainfall. Mean temperature increases from 63° in January to 86° in May, the average for the year being 78°. The highest mean

maximum is 97° in April and the lowest 50° in January. The annual rainfall averages 57 inches, of which 4.7 inches fall in May, 9.7 in June, 15.4 in July, 11.2 in August and September and 3.4 in October. However, Malda is considered less unhealthy than its adjacent districts.

Sahabanchak: The Field of Study :

Sahabanchak, the area of the present research activity, lies in the 'East of, and about seven kms. away from, the Farakka Super Thermal Power Plant and about 28 kms. away from the district headquarters of Malda in the South. Further, it is hardly nine kms. away in the West from India-Bangladesh border. Sahabanchak is surrounded by Golapganj Anchal Panchayat lying in the East, Bhagebanpur and Krishnapur Anchal Panchayats in the South, while its Western and Northern parts are surrounded by Bedrabad Anchal Panchayat. However, Sahabanchak as a whole is covered by a geographical area of about 15 sq.kms. Sahabanchak is internally connected by mostly kuchcha roads. These roads are said to be repaired every year but a trace of repair is hardly spotted in the whole area. As the local tradition records, the local potentates belonging to the state's ruling party unscrupulously grab the funds allocated to the Panchayat for rural development. A small portion of the area connected by the brick-built roads covers only those localities which are either inhabited by, or are glowing in the lime light of, local party - giants. All other facilities in this connection have yet

be inculcated among the local leaders as well as among the general masses.

Broadly, Sahabanchak is constituted as a Anchal Panchayat Constituency by a good number of villages. They include Setangapara, Sahabanchak Chulkenipara, Kupkandi, Tiweritola, Sikasti, Malatipur, Gopalpur, Kalinagar, and Chandra Narayanpur. The total population of Sahabanchak is nearly 15,000 of which 10,000 is Muslim, while the rest (5,000) Hindu individuals. Numerical predominance of the Muslims is often said to be the cause of Muslims' predominance on local panchayat politics. As the local tradition records, the elected Pradhans of the Anchal Panchayat did ever spring from the Muslim community since the panchayati raj was introduced in this area.

..... This is one reason for the hectic participation by the Muslims in, at least, locally based panchayat politics. But the fact appears that the rate of political participation by both, Hindus and Muslims, seems significantly increasing by reason of the alarming emergence of the reactionary forces of the RSS in and around Sahabanchak. In other words, rate of political participation is increased by a new political culture brought about by the RSS. Moreover, Sahabanchak is beset, on all its sides, with several RSS training camps organised for raising paramilitary forces- shouting all antinational and communal rather anti-Muslim slogans being one of the camp activities.

But it will be wrong to suppose in view of hectic participation that Sahabanchak is culturally of the age. Although it is true that

the Youth, both Hindu and Muslim, of late subscribe some periodicals, but they are not meant for instilling cultural outlook in their readers ; they are as mere communal monthpieces as used for getting the information about Hindu-Muslim unrest or Govt. favouritism to, and Govt. protection to, Hindu and Muslim communities, respectively. Books and other reading materials are not at all of regular use, unless it is necessary for obtaining passing marks in the examination. As a result, educational backwardness or cultural ignorance does not matter in Sahabanchak; that educational prosperity does lead to economic solvency is yet to be properly inculcated among the people. That is why, one, for instance, borrows money rather for marriage or a piece of land on high interest, but never cares to borrow for children's education. As a consequence, education in the length and breadth of Sahabanchak, is confined to a tiny minority- obviously most well-off in economic attainments. Low education is ostensibly caused by extreme want of education centres in this area. There are a few primary schools in Sahabanchak. Except a Jr. High School/^{no} other education centres exist here. College or University is a far cry. But fact shows that Sahabanchak is surrounded by High Schools and + 2 schools in all its sides. Therefore, absence of education centres in this area is not more important cause of low education for the male folk than for the female ones- because of observance of purdah to an extent.

However, low education but high political participation in Sahabanchak was one reason behind my undertaking an empirical study

here. Another important reason involves a reconsideration about the State's capability of maintaining exemplary communal harmony in view of engulfing appearance of communal reactionary forces of RSS in most of the Hindu-inhabited villages which was an esoteric phenomenon of urban settings. The third reason was that I belong to this area, and I wanted to see and show through the lense of research apparatus.

In fine, it will not be irrelevant to note here a remarkable feature of Sahabanchak. It is all about the absence of caste system in any form or to any extent among the Muslims. Absence of caste system, not only refutes the common generalisation of social stratification which is almost true to all over the country, but also precludes a large number of empirical derivations about caste-based politics and caste-feuds able to give rise to political exploitation of men by men. One may be struck to note that Sahabanchak, as far as its Muslim inhabitants are concerned, ^{not at all} is/a stratified society on the basis of caste or zot or brraderi. But it is so. And they too will be more struck to hear that Muslims are an egalitarian society in practice and ^{not} a mere replica of the Hindu Varnashram dharma, on the whole. They must have experienced various occupations in life, but are not at all aware of occupational groups. Similarly, they are aware that marriage is arranged only after an enquiry about the party's personal, economic, educational or lineal and familial positions, but they are thoroughly ignorant of what the phrase 'heddi ka maal' (purity of blood and bone)-

strictly corresponding to 'purity and pollution' in terms of Hinduism -means. Even then, it can be assured that all this fact about Muslim society in Sahabanchak and in all other parts of India precludes that neither are there caste and caste-feuds nor are there any political exploitation or distorted forms of political cleavages in the area. It is not possible for one to acquire firsthand knowledge, unless one systematically goes through this pioneering study on Sahabanchak.

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CHAPTER -III

ECONOMIC ORGANISATION

Agriculture :

Rural economy is lately slowly passing through the processes of diversification and transformation from agriculture to other occupations. Yet, agriculture is still held responsible to the whole population of Sahabanchak for food grain supply and cash obligations. Therefore, acquiring more and more arable acres and properly cultivating them did not lose much of its importance. As a result, all of my 454 Muslim households are seen to possess cultivable land. The total holding of the respondents is 2652 acres with the average and individual range are , respectively, 2.3 acres and 50 and 1.0 acres (Fallow, culturable waste, sharecropped, amounts, lease, tenancy, homestead, etc. all inclusive).

In all those lands, there is prevailing a conventional type of farming . Farmers do grow those crops which they saw their fore-fathers grew and in the same manners as their forefathers did. Therefore major crops grown in the length and breadth of Sahabanchak include paddy, wheat and jute ^{paddy} and wheat providing to the whole area with food grain security, while the jute with cash security are known as the most soil-exhausting crops. Agricultural Development officer and his staff members

unanimously admitted that their motivation to diversification of agriculture has not worked up to the mark at any place, and also met cool reception in Sahibganj.

Other crops which are grown on small scale are pulses, vegetable, mustard, maize, barley etc. Most of these crops are much more profitable than those grown on large-scale. But in view of poor irrigation system in the area and absence of market yards around, only a few farmers most of who owned very little amounts of holding grow them. Reason behind the aversion by the big farmers in this regard can better be seen in a recent survey¹, of a village known as Solahari being a part of those villages constituting the entirety of Sahibganj. The survey, however, reports, "...the entire village economy is declining, simply because the landed-aristocracy has now turned towards its total breakdown. Though, at present, the classes II (Self-sufficient cultivators) and III (agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and service holders) are in economic safety, yet they are still much far to occupy the place that the Class I landed aristocracy had been vacating for the last two decades".

This statement signifies the fact that the people in general are not much satisfied with agricultural returns and look out for certain other avenues which I shall be discussing in the subsequent parts of this chapter. But this agricultural state of backwardness does not preclude the fact that though the pressure

of the over crowding population on land has been decreasing gradually, the lust for and demand for, land has not at all decreased, on the contrary, there exists a craze for owning more and more land. My observation on this phenomenon made me look at another latent phenomenon. Owning land ^{is} one of the most solid bases of social status. That is to say, the degree of ownership of land always indicates the degree of socio-economic status of rural folk. For this reason, one who does not own much land is always disdained and looked at askance being called a mere 'nangta' ^(R1). I also found that a landless individual regardless of his key positions in other fields exhorts all his efforts to hide his real position in agricultural economic organisation and tries to look a 'grihostho' ^(R2) to the extent he can. Therefore, ownership of land is still regarded as the status symbol as found by Herbert C. Aggarwal² at Chevandi Kalan. As a result, acquisition of land claims much attention of even those people who have acquired white collar jobs in exchange for money they had procured from a sale of a sound piece of land.

This phenomenon could not gather so much momentum when the West Bengal Land Reforms Act of 1956 was enacted. Desire in peoples' mind remained dormant till the United Front headed by

R1. Nangta etymologically means naked; a landless man commands or no respect in rural society accordingly.

R2. Grihostho is a local slang indicates an individual holding an amount of land as enough as his whole family needs to live on.

C.P.I.(M) came into power in the State in 1969. 'Khas' (R3) land soon started being acquired by landless as well as landowning party-cadres. But the process of acquiring 'Khas', lands soon proved unscientific because of three major reasons. The first is that the constitutional right of the landless was super ceded by the landowning class because this class grabbed most of the land found as such and the landless class still remained deprived of naturally. Unfortunately before the state govt. might do something for this class, the Government itself had soon been dissolved within a short span of time. The next reason relates to the autocratic mode of acquisition of khas land by the 'spurious party-cadres.' (R4) Mainly these spurious cadres who already developed a personal vengeance and trot against certain 'jotedars' started acquiring also those plots of land which were never designated as 'Khas land'. Yet another reason is that the lust for Khas land whelped large numbers of spurious partycadres. They were never attached to the party, on the contrary, they erstwhile remained aloof from all political obligations and even cherished a prejudiced outlook about and a rather hatred for it. Now they randomly took active part in acquiring land regardless of legal claims, like a fisherman tightening the

23. 'Khas' land is indicated the amount of land which is held by a jotedar beyond the capacity of his ceiling.

24. 'Spurious Partycadres' are those who soon affiliated themselves the party came into power for the pursuit of acquiring khas land.

waistcloths jumped at a pond full of fishes floating on the water - surface.

Such activities not only damaged or blurred the image of ruling party of the State, but also resulted into large numbers of litigations many of which are still pending in the law-courts. These cases produced manifold negative effects. Good terms on which a low and ^a high maintained a relationship like affines have collapsed for ever with the result of bloody confrontation. Bloody confrontation also puffed the files up of criminal cases which often proved fund-damaging to both the parties. Thus, many of the litigating parties have been done for. Respondents recorded as many as seven such cases of this area in the law courts hanging in balance. This also caused to break kinship ties or at least caused great imbalances in the kinship ties between parties involved in litigation.

However, the greed for land ownership produced a new phenomenon in the state in general and in Saharounchak, in particular. Out of mere personal grudge for jotadars made a man mad of owning patta or less from Govt. To gain this object, landless and even land owning farmers amply bribed Govt. officials in the Block's Land Reforms office in both the ways, in cash and in kind. Most of my respondents believe that a Land Reforms Officer, Circle Inspector, ^{or} Settlement Officer or even a Surveyor

could earn much more than a Block Development Officer does. So, landgreed and bribe together led to appropriation of others' landed property during the zameen (land settlement) also. This situation also followed the earlier instance of litigation-litigation for misappropriation and litigation for bloodshed on one hand, and destruction of funds and property, and sometimes, even of loss of human lives, on the other. Besides litigations in large number, informants informed us that every year, there emerge several property -murders around Sahabanchak, and this murdering atmosphere becomes very ripe time for some local dalais (who accompany the involved parties in litigation matters and clandestinely grab money on false pretexts).

Land Dispute and Involvement of Party :

This situation becomes so acute that every disputing party is advised or inclined to establish links with the influential cadres of the ruling party and tries to inflict a defeat on the other party. One that had no political attachment to the party tries to bring out kinship or affinity, or, in the lack of such relationship, at least personal familiarity which is often shown as more prominent and above, the kinship or affinity, if it is already established between the party cadre and contending party. But most interesting thing is that every party lacking direct relationship with any of the influential party cadres present from certain remote place the party cadres'

relations and affines and kins to attain success in the pending disputes. Thus involvement of ruling party in land dispute becomes obvious, as the party-cadres cannot ignore the fact that besides their sustaining political role, they are also somebody's uncle, brother, brother-in-law, nephew, son-in-law, cousin and else, in social kinship ties. In this way, kinship is also politicised on such grounds or the other.

Kinship organisation proves more useful where both the contending parties are affiliated to the ruling party. In consideration of their attachment to the party, party cadres often try to edjudge the case. But where the contending parties are bent on to inflict shock and defeat on each other leaving no scope as such, there kinship or affinity stand in good stead to put a practically reasonable solution to the crisis, whereby kins and affines benefit more over others having no kinship or affinity with the party cadres. This produces in the defeated party not only a direct vengeance for the winning party but also generates extremes of grievances against the party cadres, in particular, and the party itself, in general with the natural consequence of the defeated party's sudden desertion from the party for ever. Together with certain other reasons, this has produced, as observed by myself and my informants, a bulk of 'bikshubdhas' (agitated or grieved or perturbed) numbering in hundreds. It is also seen that another number of people who were recently favoured and sided by the party cadres joined the ruling party. But the number of incoming individuals is lesser than the number

of outgoing bikshubdhe persons.

However, the phenomenon of acquisition of land after 1969 brought a new air in the agricultural society throughout the State of West Bengal. This point relates to the conditions of the landless labourers and bargaders. Andre Betelle³, however, describes, "In West Bengal the acquisition of estates did not significantly alter the situation of the bargaders and Share-croppers who operated between 25 and 46 percent of the cultivated area in different districts. Their conditions of tenure, until the West Bengal Land Reforms Act of 1956, were insecure and sharing of both input and output gave the advantage to the landowner rather than the tenant. Further the distribution of holdings was uneven (Agrarian Social Structure, Oxford Univ. Press, N.D. 1974, p.77).

Another important thing which should not lose sight of an empirical evaluation relates to the involvement^{of} religious bias in settling disputes between the parties belonging to two different denominations. This is quite a new phenomenon in West Bengal's political activities. This phenomenon which frequently prevails in and around Sahabanchak is directly fuelled and fanned by some reactionary and communal forces, like the R.S.S. R.S.S. clothed in 'Sat Gange' took its firm roots not only in the urban settings but also in the rural settlements and started communalising things arising in between two different faiths. I have counted

as many as 60 which my Muslim informants estimated to be more than, 600, highly educated party-cadres even holding key positions in the party/^{and} local leadership who are above-board in the helms of P.S.S. organisations set up in every village or hamlet where a little more than 10 households exist. Because of my close familiarity with all the villages I studied, I could not gain access to the secret discourses of RSS communal organisations but envisaged a Hindu individual who was the Principal of a Jr. High School. He took me for a pukka militant communist and true activist, and told all to me he chanced to listen in a secret 'Sat Sangs'. A substantial part of his acquirement from the RSS meeting related to an oration about putting the Hindu folk at the most privileged positions that the Hindu political leaders held by virtue. Therefore, and to land dispute must result in facilitation of Hindu contenders by any means. As a result, one of the most prominent local leaders, in favouring a Hindu contender with no sympathy for the party, went to the local police station in order to lodge a criminal suit against a Muslim individual holding membership of the Party's local body despite the fact that the Hindu was sheer guilty of commencing the dispute.

A similar view is held by Harkishan Sing Surjeet⁴ about the failure of land reforms. To quote Surjeet,

"In order to show that it is more radical than the Congress, the Janata Government has decided to include all land

legislations in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. We welcome the decision because this has been the demand of Kisan Sabha since long and we have been fighting for the inclusion of all land legislations in the Schedule. But will it provide any solution ? What can the Ninth Schedule do, if the legislation is full of loopholes to favour the landlords. It is known that some of the Janata Governments like in Orissa and Gujarat want to amend even the existing laws which will cancel whatever little had been declared as surplus either. Such laws will also find protection in the Ninth Schedule . He further throws light on land situation in West Bengal ,

"... in West Bengal, there are hundreds of thousands of acres of benami land held by the landlords... each piece of land is (to be found) under the ceiling limit, but actually the land lords have managed to keep huge farms of hundreds of acres. In various States, landlords have been able to keep lands under benami transactions in the name of dead or non-existent people and even of dogs.⁵

As a result, bargaders and landless labourers could not improve much in the conditions of landholding and Sharecropping and tenancy. But in fact, landlords already holding much more than they could easily keep under the ceiling limit occupied others' land lying within the capacity of coercion in the name of barga and soon asserted their tenancy rights on the basis of bribes to the Govt. officials for

perpetuating their possession. At least 36 such cases have been reported besides as many as 20 cases lying in my knowledge in Sahabanchak.

Employment :

As everywhere, employment is one of the basics to the organisation of economic life in human society. Sahabanchak also gives sound importance to the need and want of employment for improving economic quality of life among its habitants. Therefore, it is clear that though acquisition of land did not lose much its importance of economic value and its status value, but is, at present, being gradually superseded by employment and some other occupation like retailing business which I shall deal with in the subsequent part of this chapter.

However, greater importance of employment than that of land-tilling is directly attached to people's psychological and practical (that is, economic) value-judgement. People psychologically feel that all the land which virtually belong to the Govt. will one day wither away from the possession of the 'public' (general masses) by any means. This may be caused by necessity of vast areas for permanent stationing of military or for constructing air base just near to the India-Bangladesh border in order to teach Bangladesh a good lesson for its mischievous acts on the borderland of India.^(R5) Acquisition of land by the Govt. will

R5. This has practically imbibed in men's mind for two reasons : One is the growing emerging needs of border security in the East which has caused to build up a number of Police Station, B.S.F. camps capturing vast areas; another is the settings of a Township (now on foot) and a Super Thermal Power Plant nearby.

certainly cause to lessen the ceiling-size which will ultimately result in indiscriminate eviction of the land owners holding any size or amount. And this is not much far to devolve on themselves in a near future. In such a worst of the emerging situations, survivors will be the persons holding employment^{and education} at present.

Thus, employment is inculcated among people to be the guarantee for economic survival. From this view, the fact can not be ignored that an employment is conditioned by a permanent and enduring economic security to man in general. Therefore, their psychological insight is based on some pragmatic value so far as employment to be the economic security of men is concerned.

The practical value they attach to employment is manifested. Employment is considered to be the next important basis of social status to the ownership of land. In my recent visit, for instance, one of the land holders named an individual of his village who is a senior school teacher and holding nearly two acres of land. He considered him to be matchless and unparalleled on any count in the village in spite of the fact that a number of households in the same village are holding above 40 acres some being supplemented by retailing shops and newly acquired appointment to a teaching post in a High School. The whole thing might not be true, but its factual stress was squarely put on sound employment like teaching as or better source fetching about 2,000 rupees per month than cultivation. The argument of the cultivator alludes that he himself is tired

of his own agricultural occupation, and therefore sees all better in others occupation. And so I came, in the course of interview to know that my informant is very much inclined to educate his eldest son so that he can seek employment akin to his "matchless and unparalleled" neighbour. And he is even ready to donate upto 50,000 rupees to an employing school.

Another point of arguing about the practical value and importance of employment is much relative to the observation of the village cultivator (discussed in the just preceding paragraph) that at least the big farmers want to depend more on employment than on their traditional agricultural occupation for some strong reasons. Once again I should like to refer to this point to the Survey report on Colabari.⁶ It writes, "... non-availability and very high cost of hard-availled labour shall be taken into account. Indeed, it is a crisis to the Class I farmers who usually fail to put enough labour that is required for a proper cultivation.... this crisis is there because of the large numbers of bidi-making units and the Farakka Super Thermal Power Plant etc. which grabbed with large numbers of persons.... Since such works demand less labour and pays higher wages than agricultural work does, agricultural labourers' wage demands exceed all limits of reasonability in charging an amount which often goes beyond the capacity of the Class I farmers.

"... the Class I farmers are more in economic depression because of the disproportionateness between the costs of production and produce. ... the Class I farmers fail to manage all their arable

acres, because the size of holding often proves larger than they themselves could cultivate properly in all the seasons. As a result, a sound amount of land remains uncultivated for one or even two seasons." (pp.5-6) The above factors thus caused drastic decline in agricultural returns, on one hand, and by lessening the importance of cultivation, put higher importance on employment as an occupation as always ensuring a guarantee and promise of economic profit and not loss in any event.

The next practical value attached to employment is that employment is considered to be 'the best vehicle of education'. In other words only employment can ensure much better and higher education in the family containing employed members. Therefore, it is everywhere seen in and around Sahabanchak that children from employment group are educationally much superior to those from agricultural households. It has been found in Sahabanchak that 10 percent children from employment-group 2.5 per cent from business -group and rest from agriculture group are going to schools. Of the total respondents 464, only 40 respondents are employed in various sectors, 27 are either in retailing or in trading business and rest are either landowning farmers or agricultural labourers ^{OR} were bidi makers. Of the total number of households, only 15 are post graduates, 37 graduates 115 educated, upto High School and 149 below High School while the rest are illiterate. The data relating to employment and education allude that this area on the whole is educationally backward and therefore the rate of employment is very little.

Employment and Politics :

Besides, employment is one of the bases of political organisations and activities of the rural life of Sahasrabachak. People of all strata take part in political life with certain economic objects, employment being one of them. In other words, employment basically summons the bidders under some political banner to shought either, 'iroualeo zindabad' or 'bunde' materal'. And, to stand under a political banner to Shrick wareries, one is not required to be led by any political ideology. There is no such a political party that dictates no political knowledge and ideas to be a pre-condition for political participation. Every party existing in India simply requires and acquires people's voting support in elections and voicing company in processions and meetings.

In exchange for such cooperations, the party assures fulfilment of peoples' demands and claims that never know law. Employment has, therefore, been a weapon in the hands of political parties to mobilise the masses in their favour. To gain this object, every political party makes the best and the most possible use of this weapon over the educated section of society, because the party feels that this section forms the village intellectuals and elite group that constitutes public opinion for the whole rural community, but the fact appears that the socio-political dynamics have tremendously

complicated the rural situations and that every sensible person, regardless of illiterate, tries to remain behind the curtain and hardly heeds to others sayings and advices.

Nonetheless, the rural educated section falls the prey of political bait, and gets tremendously exploited for several years in anticipation of an employment. Informants recorded as many as 32 youth with all levels of educational attainments are being politically exploited. Highly educated (above graduation), two of them assured of posts in High School teaching, are still on the line for the last 11 years whereas, secret report reveals at least 9 teaching posts lying vacant in the school for the last several years, -at least 15 years. In fact, in view of these vacancies in the School, these youth changed their political colour and admixed it with that of the school's local authorities. But the authorities grew a hard nut crack, and began to extract from them all kinds of advantage to the extent they could. Unemployed for the last several years and dependent on household income for pocket money, all the educated youth are often asked for their implicit and explicit or direct and indirect help in raising party funds on several occasions, like , political suit, reception party thrown to state or Union Minister, political meetings, elections, etc. In addition, it is a bounden duty of the job-seekers to attend with presents as best as their purse allows the marriages of the leaders' relations. One of my respondents told me every job-seeker spends on the party he belongs to more than any amount he

earns from some petty sources, like tuition, etc, and it has been estimated that about 1,00 rupees is extracted from every job-bidder every month.

Job-bidders also found another way to acquire it, is that/on the basis of bribe to either the employing sector (mostly High Schools) directly or to the political leaders, in the name of donation. At present, 'donation' to a school rose between 40-50,000 rupees for a teaching post. Most of the youth of Sahabanchak are unable to donate such a vast amount for an earning 1000-1500 rupees per month. For this reason or the other, the entire section of educated youth run the political way in order to get any employment in exchange for a lessened amount of money. Thus, they fall into an economic trap of the so-called political leaders, and many were found in Sahabanchak who secured an employment on the basis of money which was obtained from a sale of cultivable land. One found donating 1,00,000 pieces of bricks to a High School for its outward development got a job in that school. There may be so many other examples of this kind.

There are some jobs almost directly lying in the hands of political leaders. Which are directly distributed solely among the party-workers. Here there appears enough scope of communal distribution of jobs. All party leaders both Muslims and Hindu are almost making open discrimination in consideration of religious identity. There are several cases of this nature

of job distribution in and around Sahabanchak. Nearly fifties of cases have been recorded by informants inside of the Sahabanchak area, where Muslim leaders discriminated against Hindus and Hindu leaders against Muslims. I have personally observed a number, little less than the above, of discrimination cases. It has been marked that Muslims are little more discriminated against by the Hindu leaders than Hindus by Muslim leaders. It has been roughly estimated that every seventh Muslim youth and every fifth Hindu youth have been discriminated against in employment situation in consideration of their religious identity respectively by the Hindu and the Muslim political leaders.

This communal distribution phenomenon aroused extremes of mental and political uproar more in the Muslim community than in the Hindu community of Sahabanchak. However, this uproar ultimately resulted into factional and fractional politics on communal lines around Sahabanchak. Thus, a feeling of communal identity is now a predominant factor for organising almost all political, social, economic and religious activities. As a result, 'dal-badal' (change of political party), non-cooperation with other religionists, joining hands with communal forces, like BCC, are an every day-venture in and around Sahabanchak. I have observed at least 60 politicians who changed the party from congress (I) to C.P.I (M) and another about 20 who joined congress (I) by deserting the C.P.I (M). Informants' number of such cases exceeds two

thousand great majority from Congress (I) to C.P.I. (M.) According to my reckoning, 25 Hindu individuals joined the RSS with the entry of at least one adult each from every household into the RSS Training Camps situated at several places, Balshnabnagar, Krishnagar and Colepgeraj Chariananda pur etc. which lies within one and two kilometers walk from the mid-point of Sahavanchak. It has been estimated that every fifteenth discriminated Hindu joined the RSS. The Hindus are mostly discriminated against in the hands of Muslim Congress (I) leaders, while the number of Muslims joining any communal forces falls almost nil. To enquire into the matter, I consulted my Hindu informants and came to know the extreme lack of such an organization for the Muslims as exists (RSS) for the Hindus. One of my Hindu informants opined, "Do you see any Muslim communal organisation throughout the district as strong as RSS? No; therefore, they can not be advised to join the RSS to ventilate or retaliate their communal grievances. But donot at all consider them (Muslims) to be less communal than the Hindus. Had they had such openings around, they might have been more militant communal forces than Hindus".

Business farms :

In view of frustration caused by poor agricultural returns and huge unemployment and underemployment around, there is appearing a growing tendency among the Muslims of Sahavanchak towards establishing business-farms in the shape of retailing shops and trading in food-grains and jute as an economic enterprise and as more paying substitute than and for cultivation and employment.

Therefore, of the whole Muslim population nearly ten percent in retailing shops and six percent in trading are engaged in and outside Sahabanchak. According to my observation, every village where Muslims are numerically larger has between fifty and sixty percent of the shops (mostly big in size and stock) owned by the Muslims, and a nearly daily market-yard contains nearly fifty percent Muslim business establishments. This daily market-yard situated at Balishnabnagar is the most important to the Muslims of Sahabanchak for not only their economic achievements, but also their political participation of the national, state and Panchayat levels. As Balishnabnagar used to be the station for all kinds of individuals of Sahabanchak in particular and of other areas in general. Someone sharing political life at any level, we shall have a little longer look at its physical, economic and political features.

Balishnabnagar :

Balishnabnagar falls in the jurisdiction of the Bedrabad village Panchayat adjacent to Sahabanchak. It lies in the west of Sahabanchak bounded in the South-West by the Krishnapur Village Panchayat in the West by the Lokshampur and Birnagar village Panchayats and in the North and East by Sahabanchak. It is lying within a walking distance from almost ^{all} parts of the above mentioned places and thus it is easily accessible to the populations

of these village Panchayats.

Baishnabnagar market (named as Motilal Nehru Market) is based on about 168 business centres nearly half of them are in wooden boxes and the remaining half in brick buildings. Of the total number , nearly half, i.e. 79 business houses almost all in rented buildings are owned by Muslims and the rest by the Hindus. Majority of the business houses situated in brick buildings either rented by the local Hindu landlords or by the Market Samitee are owned by the Muslims whereas most of the wooden boxes seldom rented are owned by the Hindus. The business houses situated in buildings deal in such superior quality of peoples' daily needs, like, clothes , machinaries, spare parts of pumpset, bicycles, watch repairing, stationeries, food-items, like, oil , ghee, spices and so on, wholesale supply of fertilizer , pesticides etc. Jewellery, books and writing materials, like paper, pen etc, radio-repairing, restaurant, tailoring , dispensary and medicine and so on majority of which are owned by Muslims. The other centres situated in wooden boxes deal in inferior quality of peoples' needs, like, tea, cigarette, bidi, betel etc. Shoe- mending, fruits like bananas, orange, etc. cooking spices and so on, ⁱⁿ almost 95 per cent are owned by the Hindus.

The area around Baishnabnagar is numerically predominated by the Hindus who built up the shop- arrangements.

But the owners of Muslim business centres are mostly hailing from comparatively remote villages. Localisation of Muslim business houses at Balshnabnager is prompted by two important reasons. The first and foremost is related to its well connection with the district headquarters, Malda, and other better developed areas, like New Barrakke (Super Thermal Power Plant), new township still on foot, etc. by the National High way 34, by pucca roads with the easy and frequent availability of bus, tange', 3-wheeler, etc. Another important reason is that Balshnabnager is ^{the} only most developing market yard within its ten Sq.km. of areas. Therefore, Balshnabnager market yard is more accessible to the populations of the Muslim community than the other market lying beyond this distance.

However, all these facilities ^{at} Balshnabnager attracted Muslim populations more than the Hindu populations. But the picture of localisation of Muslim business houses is a very recent phenomenon. Hardly a decade ago, Muslim business houses might have numbered less than a half of their present number, which were mostly tea-stalls or cigarette shops. The trend in establishing business firms emerged soon after the new C.P.(I)M. Government in the State was formed in 1977 in the wake of Emergency that had lasted for more than a year and a half. The victory of the Joint Front and specially the defeat of Indira Gandhi herself vested in the Muslims a sense of assertion for rights which they even could not dream of earlier in the autocratic environment

gripped by the Congress (I)'s goonda elements. For instance, the High School adjoining to the market ^{was} having before emergency a number of C.P.I.(M) cadres among the teachers including both male and female. All the Leftist-minded teachers including a female who was at her last of the gestational age were badly beaten up by the net goondas of the Congress (I). Soon the entire area became very notable for depravity and hoodlignism. Beating, persecution, extortion, abduction of women or rape, etc were of the most known features within this area. Such characteristics of the area ever avoided outsiders' participation in business organisation, because it was not at all secure at the night time. At day-time, a long Shriek of a goonda could depopulate the whole area. For this reason or the other, the Hindu landlords did let their construction of shop-arrangements be filled up by the rentiers hailing from any religious communities. Highly disappointed with the Congress (I) and at the activities of the goondas reared by the Congress (I), Muslims wanted to establish their footholds at Balshnabnagar and occupied those shop-arrangements on rent and started negotiating business firms with ease and at ease. Largely existent and extent on the rural Muslim pockets, the C.P.I.(M) Government also cared to look after the Muslim interests at business houses. Thus within a short period of two years of the C.P.I.(M) party's coming into power of the State, most of their present occupancies were made. Since then, there were some sporadic incidents involving Muslim businessmen which could be calmly liquidated with the interference of C.P.I.(M) ; this again confirmed the providence of

political security to the Muslim businessmen at Balahnabnagar. Since then, the local Hindu community took an anti-CPM attitude on one hand and exerted all their efforts to evacuate the Muslim occupants. Thus, the market politics came to fore.

Market Politics and Communalism

When the market situation assumed a flourishing state at Balahnabnagar, and the Muslims started capturing more and more space in the market, there came to appear a convulsive awakening among both, Hindus and Muslims. Some Muslims owned some pieces of land closely attached to the main market-floor on which they constructed buildings and rented mostly to Muslim businessmen. As the Hindus had already rented their buildings mostly to the Muslims ^{but are} ~~while~~ the Muslims avoided Hindu rentiers in most cases, the local Hindu political leaders, irrespective of party-affiliation, assumed anti-Muslim attitudes and started persuading the Hindu landlords to evacuate their Muslim occupants. I have observed as many as ten Hindu most prominent leaders at the local level while the Muslim rentiers reckoned a much larger number in persuasion of Hindu landlords.

But the entire market situation already went beyond expectations and control. The renting on Government deed was already registered on certain legal terms and conditions which

could hardly be relaxed unilaterally by one party. This could only be done when both the parties at once voice wished to annul their contract by which the occupant agreed to relinquish his counterpart's property. Because of this failure, most of the local Hindu leaders and party-activists joined hands with other party leaders to root out Muslim occupancies, on one hand, and to occupy more and more space of the market still unoccupied. One Hindu prominent and influential leader came into my observation who on some legal terms and conditions grabbed a portion of the Market-Samitee's property and built up a number of shop-arrangements on it and rented almost all the Hindu businessmen. However, appropriation of Market-property by an individual could not be tolerated by the Market Samitee consisting of members hailing from Hindu and Muslim communities irrespective of ownership of business houses in the market. However, the market Samitee adopted a legal stance to dispossess him. Settling of the dispute was referred to as a local one and thus the Local Committee of the Party set on discourses with the Market Samitee to this end. Discourses were held for long times during a whole year and all proved futile for the problem at hand but proved prolific in generating another problem i.e. Hindu - Muslim disharmony. The chance of communal disharmony mounted to the apex when a Muslim Samitee member described illegal appropriations of market property by individual and religious organisation. He also cited an ~~example~~ ^{example} of appropriation of a portion by the local Hindu religious organisation as the site of Hindu temple, the space occupied as the temple-site was never sanctioned by the Government, while the Hindus claimed

the space to be already legally sanctioned. Now on wards, the Muslim complainant used to be accused as a person who tried to blow and threaten a different religious faith. Soon this view about and the perception of the intention of the Muslim Samitee member brought about a new slogan in the P.W. Training Camp, 'Aggression on Hindu religion by Muslims will not be tolerated' in Hindustan.

This fury among the communities aroused my immense zeal for a scientific look at what the fact was. Therefore, I once gained access to the map of the market which had all demarcations of fractions of occupancies. I thoroughly examined the map but did not locate such an area demarcated as a temple-site as claimed by the Hindus. Nonetheless, both the disputes - dispute between the Market Samitee and the Hindu individual, and that between the Market-Samitee and the Hindu community with the claim of temple-site-, have now disappeared, and the claims of the individual and the Hindu Community have been restored to their claimants.

The failure of the Muslim communists and the success of the Hindu-leaders and the Hindu Community whetted all weapons and instruments of the communal and reactionary forces over those social issues. As a consequence, I have reckoned a number

of communal incidents between Hindus and Muslims over some trifling subjects. One which I noted down in my data-sheet some days after the incident took place was related with a religious issue. A group of Hindu devotees approached a Muslim shop-owner dealing in sale and repair of bicycles, and asked for an amount of 'Chanda' (donation) as they were collecting around the market yard for raising funds for the imminent Durga Puja (Dashera). The Muslim refused to accede their request, saying "It is thoroughly contravening the fundamental principals of our own religion." Such an argument led to bitter and furious verbal exchange of abuses, and would have certainly resulted into a bloody confrontation, had not some local people come to their rescue and put an end to it. Another incident between shopowners, obviously one being Hindu and another Muslim, was about the repayment of dues of the Hindu by the Muslim. To be precise, the Hindu who owned cigarette bidi-pan shop in a wooden box claimed that the Muslim who owned a clothshop in a brick building rented to him by a local Hindu landlord, was payable an amount to him. The Muslim, however, disowned his claim to be true and refused to pay further. During the course of their verbal exchanges, along with the curious gays some of the Hindu's friends noticed the situation closely and stimulated him, 'dear, marna Balse Ke' (beat, do not hesitate to do it). Therefore, a physical altercation took place for a sound enough time before the peace-loving people reached the spot and detached one from another. My respondents told me 'such an incident is like a week-end pleasure for the involved and the curious individuals adhering to Balasubrahmanagar, -it is a very nasty place; indeed, very bad one'.

Animal Husbandry :

Besides, animal husbandry is another avenue of economic organisation in Sahabanchak. Raising of cattle is a sheer necessity for almost all agricultural households of Sahabanchak for a single reason. The entire arable acres are tilled with wooden plough drawn by bullocks and buffaloes. No Muslim household throughout Sahabanchak uses other land-tilling implements, like tractor. But this feature of the agricultural households does not mean that they do not feel the other needs and necessities of cattle. Their feeling of need or want must coincide with that of other agricultural communities in which cattle raising always leads to economic benefit and agricultural advantage. The better example can be cited at present from Aggarwal's study of Chaurandi Kalan.⁷ To quote him, ... he ⁽¹⁾ (a cattle-raising Kshatriya) can sell a few heifers and a few bullocks every year for cash, (2) he obtains plenty of manure, ownership of cattle is considered a sign of affluence. Therefore, cattle-raising has become a status symbol the ownership of large herd of cattle, regardless of their quality, is a means to assert... importance in the village" (p. 89)

In addition to such needs of cattle observed by Aggarwal, I have noted a number of needs of cattle-raising in Sahabanchak (1) Every household needs a large number of cattle for threshing the crops. No household found so far possesses threshing-machine so that it could avoid the need of cattle. (2) Every

Muslim household has had vast use of beef. Supply of beef in enough quantity is possible only when there exists larger number of cattle in a household than it needs for agricultural cultivation. No household can enjoy beef to its heart's content on the supply from outside. Therefore, cattle-raising is of much importance to suffice for this purpose. (3) Cattle-raising is also important for the supply of milk. Thus cattle-raising is of vast importance to every household as far as the necessities are concerned. But the fact I envisaged, showed me a wondrous picture in every household. Out of the total Muslim households I have most closely studied (464), less than 400 households acquired a required number of cattle for a convenient and proper cultivation, while many other households numbering more than 50 are having a lesser number of cattle than they, in actuality, need for a convenient and proper cultivation. Only the rest numbering hardly 14 acquired a larger number of cattle than they need for cultivation- the additional number being of cows that are lactating and milk-yielding.

This picture of cattle-raising in Sahabanthak led to me to an interrogative look-through which I satisfied myself with following answers provided by the informants. (1) There is great risk in keeping large number of cattle because in every moonless night there are chances of theft of them. The chances of theft from an area hardly nine kms. away from India-Bangladesh border in the East are much more than from an area which is very

far from the India - Bangladesh border. From this point of view the western part of the district is having lesser risk than the Eastern part. It involves a simple reason; - the cattle or any other properties easily movable taken out from the house are led to Bangladesh, because after crossing the border during night time the thieves become free and easy and far away from being compelled by any body to restore the properties to their owners in India. This is an international problem which India (especially the area lying close to India-Bangladesh border) suffers much more than Bangladesh enjoys. Anyway, the chance of theft of cattle greatly lessens the number of cattle in most of the households of Sahabanchak.

There is mass-exodus of cattle from India to Bangladesh every day at broad day light. I have counted one day's cattle, led through a kuchcha road towards the border and got a startling number of 2,515 during a period of 9 hours. It means, the number of cattle being led to Bangladesh for a period of twenty-four hours must be much more than I got in nine hours. This process of exodus of the cattle is highly conducive to intensification of the cattle-crisis in India in general and in Sahabanchak in particular. This crisis ultimately generates short supply of cattle in the market which is a precondition ^{for} price-rise and economic pressure.

Concerning both the above mentioned factors causing inadequate cattle-raising in Sahabanchak, more than

ninety-five per cent of my informants suggested that there should be no passport -like conditions between Indian and Bangladesh so that people of both the countries can set their journeys to end free at large, and can make longer search after their missing or stolen properties^(R6).

There is a growing complaint from the Hindu neighbours against keeping larger number of cattle than required in agriculture. This is because of their perception that the Muslims raise more cattle than required simply to slaughter them for acquiring food. This complaint, however, took the shape of slogan in all the nearby RSS Training Camps, 'Goe-hatya chalana; goe-heunteke Pakistan Jete hawbe, etc. (There must be no cow-slaughter, Cow-slaughterer must flee to Pakistan). Such a complaint does not at all work in the areas where Muslims are larger in number; but Muslims are afraid in some area of their Hindu neighbours who outnumbered them, and can not, therefore, consume beef as much and often as they want.

R6. In this regard, I recall a question and a reply to it when there were efforts on the part of Indian Government to fence the border with barbed wires. Some asked another, who do you think will profit by this endeavour? The reply was "this endeavour will certainly profit one dealing in barbed wires.

Though this situation creates sometimes much scope of untoward incident yet it never happened within at least Sahabanchak. In view of the circumstances, Government cares to keep vigilance against communal violence. By police patrols Government also ensures peace and communal harmony between the communities at the time of cow-slaughter, especially at the time of Kurban (Sacrifice of cows and goats) on Eid-ul-Azha.

Bidi-making :

The length and breadth of Sahabanchak is beset with bidi-making units. Bidi-making is the most paying and the least labour-consuming work, and is therefore preferred to agricultural labour by more- than 95 per cent of the existing households of Sahabanchak. A bidimaker gets twenty-seven rupees for one thousand bidi he makes, and thus avoids moving out to put menial labour on other's agricultural field. This caused tremendous reduction in agricultural labour force.

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CHAPTER - IV

EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Education has direct and indirect bearings on all social aspects of life of people. A literate or educated people are a prerequisite both for maintaining and further developing modern societies. The crucial need of education for the people in various sphere of life (economic, political, social ethical and so on) has been unanimously recognised. A. S. Lessai¹ however puts forth certain reasons why education has immense significance in modern times :

Economic reasons : In contrast to the multitude of self-sufficient village economies which mainly constituted the economic life of premodern communities, the economy of a modern people has a national basis. Further even, this national economy has been largely outmoded in recent decades and has become an integral part of the single world economy. The national economy, in fact, produces industrial, agrarian and other commodities both for the national and international markets. Consequently, it is the world price movement of various commodities which finally determines the volume and price of products in different production centres.

Political reasons : Education is necessary for the modern rural aggregate also for political and administrative reasons. After

the modern society evolved, the village has become an integral part of the political and administrative machinery of a highly centralised state. Since the modern state appreciably shapes the economic, social and cultural life of the people, it is indispensable for the rural people to study its mechanism. The rural man needs to know a minimum of law, governing judicial and administrative processes as well as processes of various state organs. Further, in recent decades, various political parties have sprung up in the rural area. These parties struggle between themselves to win the support of the rural people with a view to gain control over the state. It is, therefore, also necessary for the rural people to study the programmes and policies of these political parties. Both these reasons make it obligatory for them to have education.

Social reasons : Education is essential for the rural people also for the broad social reason, i.e. that all social relations between citizens are, in modern society, governed by the principle of contract and not by status as in the former epoch. Contractual social relations are complex and multifold demanding from the citizen an understanding of the basic structure of the modern society and hence this need for education. The economic relations between citizens, the relations between the members of the family and other types of social relations which in their totality form the complex variegated pattern of the modern society, are

governed by laws based on the principle of contract. Only an educated citizen can have a comprehension of such a diversified system of contractual relations.

Ethical relations : There is another reason why the rural man must be an educated man. In modern society the ethical life of the individual as well as of the social aggregate is increasingly being based on secular and humanist instead of on religious principles as in the medieval society. Equality of all men, individual liberty, development of human personality, reason as the human determinant - such are some of the principal conceptions which have been progressively determining the behaviour of the individual and the social aggregate. Modern education absolutely necessary to comprehend these basic conceptions.

Cultural reasons : Education is also the prerequisite for the study and assimilation of the rich culture which has developed in the contemporary age. Human knowledge of the natural world has registered a phenomenal advance in modern times, giving man a greater mastery over nature. Similarly, knowledge in the sphere of social life too has immensely grown, thereby enabling man to mould his collective social life more consciously. Further, there has been a tremendous advance in the field of artistic culture also. A part of this modern culture has even

acquired the character of a world culture. Education is indispensable for assimilating this mighty world culture so vital for enriching the intellectual and emotional life of the individual and thereby, increasing his capacity to contribute to the advance of society. The best part of modern culture lays strong emphasis on individual liberty and social cooperation both of which are so essential for the development of the individual's personality and powers and for social progress. The citizen who imbibes such a culture will feel an inevitable urge to work for the creation of a society free from social antagonisms and discord and based on social solidarity and individual freedom.

Dessai lays emphasis also on the educational need of the rural folk. For the agriculturist, education is, in addition, necessary for understanding of the advantages of the use of such advanced agricultural techniques as tractors, fertilizers, harvesters and thrashers. But unfortunately there found a shockingly large portion of the Indian rural population submerged in gross ignorance and illiteracy.

A Functionalist Approach to Education : The importance of education is much emphasised by the functionalists. Emile Durkheim², the French Sociologist, saw the functions of education as the transmission of society's norms and values. He maintained that 'Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and

reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands.'

³
Talcott Parsons, the American Sociologist, writing in 1950s, argues that after primary socialisation within the family, the school takes over as the 'focal socialising agency', therefore the school acts as a bridge between the family and society as a whole, preparing the child for his adult role. Like Parsons, Davis and Moore⁴ see education as a means of role allocation, but they link the educational system more directly with the system of social stratification. Davis and Moore see social stratification as a mechanism for ensuring that the most talented and able members of society are allocated to those positions which are functionally most important for society.

A Marxian Approach to Education: Althusser⁵, a French philosopher considers that the educational system is ultimately shaped by the infrastructure. He argues that education is essential for the ruling class to survive and prosper, because education reproduces in a work force certain skills, and a sense of being socialised.

Like Althusser, the American economists, Bowles and Gintis argue that the major role of education is the reproduction of labour power. In particular, they maintain that education contributes to the reproduction of workers with the

kinds of personalities, attitudes and outlooks which will fit them in their exploited status. To capture the economic import of education, we must relate its social structure to the forms of consciousness, interpersonal labour and personality it fosters and reinforces in students.

However, in the light of the above theoretical frameworks suggested by various scholars, we shall have a close look at the educational organisation and life of the Sahabanchak people.

We have already seen the data of educational attainments of the 464 respondents in the preceding Chapter. However, educational attainments include 15 respondents who received postgraduate level education, 37 upto graduation level, 115 upto High School level, while 149 respondents are nominally educated, i.e. below High School and the remaining respondents numbering 148 are thoroughly illiterate. As a result it is found that nearly 70 per cent children between 7 and 10 years of age either dropped out or never went to school. Between the age-group, 16 and 19 years, there are 75 per cent of drop-outs and non-attendance either, most of them did not seat for high school examinations. Nearly, 60 per cent of the adolescents who once or twice appeared in the High School examinations and failed to get through are either engaged in agriculture or in bidi-making or in some other callings, like running a small shop, or in trading in grains, jute, etc. Most of the school going

children and adolescents with regularity are hailing from the already educated and employed group of the responding householders.

Most of my informants are of the view that more than 60 per cent children of Sahabanchak between 7 and 10 years of age are not sent to school at all, and more than 30 per cent pupils of this area drop out every year, while more than 50 per cent adolescents between 16 and 19 years fail in the High School examination and more than 50 per cent of unsuccessful pupils drop out every year and are engaged in some occupations, like agriculture, shop keeping, trading or else. The above picture of educational attainments shows that the benefits of modern education are hardly extended to Sahabanchak. Also this signifies that the educating agencies, like, British Government, various foreign missionaries, Indian Social reform organisations and the political institutions, did not produce any appreciable results in Sahabanchak. A.R. Desai, however, observed a number of problems of rural education in India, in general, which we find duly apply to our study area.

Firstly, Desai considers that the present system of rural education lays, unduly greater emphasis on the training of intellect than on the development of the physical, emotional and moral aspects of the pupils' personality. Such education results in the one-sided and therefore defective development of

young generation. It fails to evolve an integral human being with an all-sided development of his personality. He further maintains that during the long period of schooling which extends from childhood to almost adulthood, the role of general knowledge is over-emphasised. It is not related to concrete problems of real life. Consequently the educated youth, when he enters the arena of life after completing education, finds it difficult to grapple with the concrete problems of real life.

Another problem, he puts forth is related to the structure of the machinery of education. He, however, says that the task of elaborating the organisational machinery for a scientific and comprehensive educational plan millions of illiterate and ignorant villagers is a stupendous task. This task raises a number of problems. What type of primary schools should be established? How will they be coordinated with such schools started for adult literates? In what manners will the primary schools be linked with secondary schools and the latter with higher educational institutions? Should the schools in the rural area be open air or single room schools? Should they be specialised and differentiated or co-educational institutes? And, finally, how should the school time be adjusted to the exigencies of agricultural and artisan labour in which not only village adults but also youngsters participate?

The next point as the problem of rural education is the lack of modern means, which as Desai believes, have not

yet been sufficiently utilised for educational and cultural purposes. He, however, enumerates a number of means which are (a) School (b) Library (c) Museum (d) Movie (e) radio (f) mobile van (g) gymnasiums and sport centres.

Desai's another point of notice is finance and personnel lack of which, as Desai observes, hinders the free and rapid development of the productive forces of society which are necessary for a successful fulfilment of the programme of rural education and culture. Desai saw through all these existing problems of and defects in, educational system prevailing in rural India, and last of all, considered 'Rural Education,' a Herculean Task'. (p. 93-104).

Apart from the view of A.R. Desai about the problems of and defects in the education system in rural India, many other writers also looked at the system in their own perspectives. The views for inclusion here held by M.A. Karandikar⁵ in his book 'Islam in India's Transition to Modernity' seem to be appropriate because they directly point to the loopholes of Muslims Socio-political organisations caused by defective education system they adopted. Karandikar, however, looks at askance at the famous Nizamiyya Madrasahs, institutions for intermediate adult education; which, according to Karandikar, '... had a distinct religious bias with theology and jurisprudence as the central core of studies.' Karandikar maintained that with the political decline of the Caliphate, Muslim learning

in general suffered stagnation and barrenness so that with a few notable exceptions, writers on almost all subjects were satisfied to be imitators or commentators (p. 96) (Quoted in A.L. Tibawi,⁷ 'The Idea of Guidance in Islam' Islamic Quarterly, July, 1956).

The next important view held by Karandikar relates to the new policy adopted by the Government in the 1950's Caste Disabilities Removal Act which confirms that the system of grants-in-aid to educational institutions managed by private agencies, established in 1954, was of general application, and the principle was that the neutral Government would aid all institutions alike solely on the basis of secular subjects, and irrespective of their religious objectives. In practice, the missionary schools were the chief beneficiaries of the new policy, and therefore the Ulama had resented the new western culture that had invaded the Muslim dominated medieval culture in India. Because of the Act, the loss of Musavi lands had given a death blow to some of the traditional religious schools conducted by the Ulama. These schools used to receive substantial grants from the proceeds of Musavi lands and the zamindars, which all ceased to do so more with the advent of great shock caused by the establishment of missionary schools and Government schools based on secular aims which resulted in the loss of employment to religious teachers (pp. 138-9).

Another loophole in Muslim education, as pointed out by Karandikar is the establishment of the Deoband Seminary by

by Muhammad Kasim Nanawtawi and Moulana Arshad Ali Gangohi, the pupils of Moulana Mamluk Ali who had been appointed Chairman of the Board set up by Muhammad Ishaq before he left India in 1941. However, this establishment^{of the} board which was to carry out the new programme based on the experience of the disaster at Balokot and the Pathan resistance to the implementation of pure Islam, laid an emphasis on restricting religious opinions to Hanafi school and on establishing links with the Ottoman Empire. Though the Deoband was not talking in terms of Jirul Harb any longer, its potential threat could not have been ignored by a keen observer, like W.W. Hunter⁷, who in his famous book, 'The Indian Mussalmans', exposed Muslim fanaticism, religious bigotry and their rebellious nature (pp 142-3).

In view of such disabilities and handicaps in the Muslims, ...Mr. Chagla... a (Muslim) Minister... rendered these valuable and forgettable services to the Muslims: (1) Advice to flow with the cultural current of the majority, i.e. to give up their own culture and integrity; (2) Adopt Devnagri script for Urdu and the linguistic distinction; (3) Agree to amend and modify some parts of their shariat; and (4) give this right to the Secular Parliament of this country. And now what remains for him is to advise the Muslims not to waste their national wealth in the Hajj pilgrimage, for the same God is in Arabia and He can be worshipped in the same way from here. That will make his

sentiment of loyalty complete. On 3-1-1965, while addressing the educationists in the country, Chagla emphasised tolerance, understanding and broadmindedness as the true tests of education which should help to remove prejudices, predilections, superstitions and ignorance (pp. 352-3).

Therefore, in order to achieve these important goals, Karandikar points to certain Muslim nationalist leaders as called by him as 'pseudo-modernist' who, along with others, were responsible consciously or unconsciously, to a certain extent, for a disastrous effect in intercommunal mutual suspicions. He includes, as the pseudo-modernists, the names of Sheikh Abdullah, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Dr. A.J. Faridi, M.Y. Noorie, Mufti Aliqur Rehman, Humayun Kabir, A.A.A. Pyzee and so on while as the true modernists, the names of M.C. Chagla, Prof. Irfan Habib of Aligarh (Muslim) University, Prof. Rasheeduddin Khan of the Osmania University, journalists, Dr. S. Jeelaney, Hamid Dalwai and others, historians Dr. Yasin, and Dr. Athar Abbas Rizvi of Jammu and Kashmir University. Karandikar here lays great stress on a new social framework to be based on the views of the true modernists, so that the Muslims can make sound progress in all walks of life-economic, educational, socio-cultural and political (pp- 374).

Setting apart at the above-discussed things perceived as either, problems, or loopholes or factors prompting backwardness

in rural education among Indian Muslims as a whole, the empirical data drawn on education, life, of Sahabanchak people engulfed also some other features of the backward state of educational achievements by the population of Sahabanchak. Since the whole bulk of data comprised the entire geographical area of Sahabanchak, reliance is duly based on the most calculative views and estimations held by the majority of my respondents and informants to obtain the following operative phenomena in the education world of Sahabanchak.

(1) As the most important of the operative phenomena in the backward state of education in Sahabanchak, what I observed which was supported with unanimous views of nearly 95 percent of my informants is the fact that the importance of education confined itself to the purview of its capacity to bring to the educated an employment. So to say, in Sahabanchak, education in practice has got to play a single role only in acquisition of certain jobs that essentially require education commensurate with which the educated holds his or her office. Outside of such offices manned by educated individuals, education has almost proved itself to be either useless or not as important a thing as its lack or complete disappearance may cause stagnation in all other walks of human life. All other fields that have had hardly much dependence on education are all open to both the sections of society literate and illiterate. Be it a political arena, business farms, agricultural fields, or socio-cultural

like marriage or other ceremonies, or even religious, the individuals associated with those concerns do not correlate their respective affairs with education. Therefore, the literate and illiterate are never differentiated from one another in any of the aforementioned fields of human enterprises, nor assigned a hierarchical status or position accordingly. We shall now take up those areas of men's activities for consideration.

(a) Politics and Education :

Broadly speaking, provisions lying in the Indian Constitution for citizens' equal participation in political affairs do not place any hindrance in the way of the literates and illiterates either. Rather, it is very interesting to note that, whether or not the other provisions are fulfilled, the provision of equality of both literates and illiterates to all affairs lying within the purview of political system is observed to be duly implemented and fulfilled in Sahabanchak. Individuals of ^{all} strata take active part in political activities, with the result of keen contest in political elections between literates and illiterates ; but it ought not to be surmised that the illiterates are everywhere defeated by the literates. On the contrary, the illiterates achieve more appreciable results so far as the Panchayat elections are concerned. This observation of mine can be supported by quantified data I could ferret out on Sahabanchak

Anchal Panchayat. An individual with hardly primary school level literacy became Pradhan by defeating another person with I.A. level education and the highest position in a Primary school designated as Head Teacher. Similarly, an individual with High School level literacy defeated another with a graduation degree and a rank of assistant teacher in a VIII class school. The next case involves one individual with almost no educational attainments with another holding I.A. level education and the rank of a teacher in a primary school-which resulted in the winning of the former over the latter. Such examples have been noticed in almost all the political divisions under the Sahabanchak Anchal Panchayat. In this way, it proves that the educational acquirement and achievements are not the first and foremost trait and characteristics of the candidates for sharing political life, or more precisely, wielding political power. Importance of educational achievements by the candidates may and might be duly inculcated, but prominence of the contestants ⁱⁿ other qualities, (which I shall take up in the Chapter of Political Organization) quite often outvalues it.

(b) Business firms and Education :

That there is an inverse relationship between business organisation and education looks somewhat paradoxical. Because the present co-existent variables are not naturally complementary nor are they interdependent variables nor even interrelated in strict sense. In other words, business organisations are not being run with the help of educational attainments of the businessmen, nor are the businessmen organising their

business firms with a view to utilising their educational acquirement. So to say, organisation of business firms is not conditioned by the educational capabilities of the owners of the firms, and it, therefore, sets education apart from the business affairs run. Whether or not the firm owners are literate, it does not carry any importance to the men in affairs. Its empirical examples are not far to seek at the Balshonegar market yard. There are at least nineteen High School level educated and nine graduation level educated individuals from Sahabanchak running various retailing shops side by side with many other illiterate individuals in the same manners or techniques. But their improvement in household economics does not show or indicate any sign or imprint of education or lack of education. On the contrary, the uneducated businessmen feel themselves equal to the intellect and business aptitude of the educated ones, while the educated ones for their education feel themselves small to the former accordingly. All the more, four of those who took the credit of worth Rs. 35,000 each under the Government's Selfemployment Scheme feel that the Government has duly undermined their educational attainments. Despite, the fact that they do earn in a month much more than others holding equal or similar educational capabilities and a rank in an office, they always compare their economic profits and

mere parasites with their uneducated fellow-enterprisers'. And they increasingly develop a sense of disaffection towards their education and learning. However, their attitudes towards education and economic organisation are not such as erst while seemed to be, and that, there exists no feed-back relationship or functional interdependence, according to their own perception, between their educational and economic performances by any apparent standard.

(C) Agricultural life and Education

The relationship between agriculture and education demands A.R. Desai's observation '... even after a hundred and fifty years of British rule, 86 per cent of total Indian population, including its advanced urban section, still remained illiterate (c. cit. p.93)'. On the basis of this datum together with the fact that more than 75 per cent of Indian population lives in villages, we can easily infer that a vast size of village population is illiterate. Therefore the population of Sahabanchak, which is as stated earlier, basically an agricultural community par excellence, is extremely backward in education and learning. It has been observed that the persons engaged in cultivation (except supervising persons) are either illiterate or nominally literate. Those who even achieved below High School level education are either in Shopkeeping or in trading. Neither the literate nor the illiterate ever feels any need of education in managing the agricultural lands or in bringing about subsistence level production in land. Therefore, according to the view

of my informants, education is still undervalued so far as its relations with cultivation are concerned. Thus it is viewed that agriculture and education are by no means the interdependent variables in Sahabanchak.

(d) Bidi-making and Education :

The bidi-making occupation is traditionally known in Sahabanchak to engage village illiterates. Therefore family elders often scold school-going children by saying 'you are not at all serious of your studies, you must be living on bidi-making'. This is the most derogatory sort of occupation assigned to the truants by the elders while scolding. In practice, this task does not demand such education and learning as an employment does. Therefore, nearly 90 per cent bidi-makers of Sahabanchak are thoroughly illiterate, while the remaining ten per cent bidi-makers who at best can write and read a little are mostly drop-outs. The entire portion of the Sahabanchak's bidi-making population, regardless illiterate, hardly tries to make any concern of their affairs to education or to those who are little literate among themselves. Thus, this task also averted duly the importance of education so far as Sahabanchak is concerned.

(e) Socio-cultural life and Education :

Socio-cultural life in Sahabanchak comprises mainly marriage and kinship, religious activities, familial affairs

and property disputes. Broadly, people, irrespective of their social and economic importance and influence, assert their social and economic importance and influence on these matters by responding to social, religious, personal, affinal, cultural and political calls- and not educational-they receive quite at times. Now we shall take those points up in some length.

Marriage that brings about kinship is one of the most prominent aspects in socio-cultural life of Sahabenchak. Marriage takes place between two Muslim parties equal to one another on some counts, like economic status, size of family distance between the houses of the parties multitude of pedigree, acquaintance and prestige in the society of the family or pedigree with least importance of education. Education in matters of marriage matters as an additional quality, therefore, is not solely able to bring about marriage, if the above things are unsatisfied. Sometimes education is taken in due consideration, when some of the things, such as acquaintance and influence of the pedigree or family in the Society, is not attached to either party, or when an employment held by the bridegroom assures the family and businessmen of the bride of his economic solvency which is aided by education. As a result, marriage of a girl with high socio-economic status to a boy with nominal socio-economic status but high education does not take place. Its simple reason I found is that such a boy is always regarded as a mere 'nangla' living on 'haster cheal and phater daani' (hand-to-mouth). In fine, education is heeded

to not as a sole determinant of marriage but one of the secondary criteria.

On the other hand, marriage of a boy with high Socio-economic status but low or almost no literacy often happens to a girl with similar socio-economic status and a higher literacy. There are hundreds of cases existing in Muslim households of Sahabanchak. Such marriages do not look much inconsistent for some strong reasons. The first reason is that marriage of Muslim rural girl, especially literate one, is one of the greatest burdens on the heads of her kins group. Therefore, her marriage at an early age, even before puberty, is usually canonised to a boy having equal status irrespective of his literacy. The second reason is the problem of dowry. Though dowry did not assume as much importance in the Muslim community as in the Hindu community, still it grows gradually as an important basis of Socio-economic status in Muslim community Sahabanchak. Therefore, when all other things are readily available with a groom, importance of education is always undervalued and even discouraged sometimes.

Dispute between affines or dispute between property owners is an everyday feature in Sahabanchak. Sometimes a dispute between affines relating to marriage, kinship or any other things takes a bloody dimension which requires an immediate and peaceful end to be put to the whole issue. In this connection people from all strata, rich and poor, businessman and cultivator, unemployed

and employed and illiterate who have had immense personal or social influence, are always invited to settle the dispute before it is placed in a police station or the regar court. Such a gathering usually contains the eldest folk of the village who are mostly illiterate or nominally literate while the most educated adults ^{are} the silent spectators curiously standing round the sitting guests and disputants. Thus, it again shows that the utility and importance of education is not as prominently wanted in settling village disputes as in the acquisition of employments.

Almost the same is the case with the religious activities of Sahabanchak people. The life cycle religious practices and observance of rites and rituals are wholly based on the knowledge imparted by the moulvis who are almost illiterate in modern education. These moulvis received deep spiritual education and learning in the mosques and maktebs which are hardly wanted and welcomed in modern societies, whereas, their knowledge and acquirement held on non-formal lines is undisputedly essential and indispensable when certain religious rites and rituals, like, marriage, aqice, etc are observed in those modern societies. In such spheres of religious life, the mere modern education held by the youngsters and adults is never given any honour or dignity. Thus the population of Sahabanchak avoids sustaining the importance and utility of education (obviously modern) in their socio-cultural spheres of life.

- (11) The next most important problematic phenomenon in education system in sahebanchak is the lack of consistency and coordination between the Syllabi adopted for the classes of (High School) Xth and (+2) IXth . This point of discussion is much relative to one of the problems of rural education observed by A. B. Desai^A it still differs widely from Desai's also. What fact lies in those syllabi is that both the Syllabi^{been} have/ formulated in such a manner that one has to exhort a long run over the vast gap in between to reach the other. So to speak, the syllabus introduced in the Xth Standard is reasonably light, whereas the Syllabus introduced in the XI & XII standards is in considerably heavy. Therefore, pupils even duly get through the Xth examination considerably fail to get a consistent result in the XII (or even XI) standard examination. The latest results of the XIIth standard examinations show nearly 40 per cent under the Madrasah Board of West Bengal and nearly 42 per cent under the West Bengal Board of Higher Secondary Education as the rates of successful examinees, while the results of the Xth standard (Madhyamik Pariksha) examination show more than 70 per cent as the rate of successful examinees. This broadly shows a vast difference between the courses chosen for both the standards. As a result, it is quite often observed that a student who already got a poor first division or good second divisionⁱⁿ X standard examination has failed to score even the qualifying marks in the subsequent examination (XIIth standard). Such an inconsistency in the

syllabi for those classes often gives rise to large numbers of drop-outs and non-attendance. And this dire consequence of drop-out and non-attendance duly devolves on Sahabanchak which ultimately results into intensification of backward state of education and learning.

- (iii) There is a popular discontent of the Muslim community against the curricula which are deliberately contravening the secular principle of Indian constitution. Secular ideal of the constitution has remained on paper. This view of S. Abul Hasan Ali-Nadwi⁵ is very prominent in Sahabanchak, the curricula as put forth by Nadwi are not at all reasonable from the secular point of view as they only contain things about Hinduism and avoid the subjects of Muslims past glories and exploits -political and cultural. Even the Prophet's deeds and character have been distorted and blurred in some books which are also to be swallowed by Muslim pupils. Nadwi considers it to be a most serious threat to their religious and cultural solidarity and the religious survival of their future generations (see S.A.H.A. Nadwi, Muslims in India, 1980 p.139 and an Interview in The Aligarh Magazine, 1984, pp. 152-160).

I also personally examined certain school and college text books. If these books are at all containing any religious ideals and morale, they certainly belong to the Hindu religious scriptures.

On the other hand, some course delineates ^{an} expressive Muslim Zaminder who causes a Hindu to disappear bag and baggage from his Zamindari. Yet there is another most important topic lying in the modern Indian history which depicts the whole Muslim community as a 'traitor' by means of the role of Mir Zafar in the battle of Plassey (1757). Such themes and topics in the history and literature produce sound disaffection in the Muslim minds in a natural manner, for the so-called modern education. Likewise the Indian history of the Muslim period often portrays Muslims to be destroyers of Hindu temples and builders of mosques on and with their sites, and ruins.

Among the literateurs who earned immense fame and glory writing on historical and concurrent aspects of human life, I must include two of the most important versatile genius- Kaviguru Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) ¹⁰ and Sahityasamrat Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1839-1894) ¹¹. Rabindranath was born and grew into a mature poetic genius in the undivided Muslim dominated Bengal. But unfortunately hardly any of his novels relates to the Muslim Community. On the contrary, a large number of his poems which are all historical in nature and background often show, a Hindu, or a Sikh contending with a Muslim ruler, and the former is brutally killed by the latter. Such poems alike others are being taught in Schools, and colleges.

Bankim Chatterjee is ever-acknowledged for his artistic talent. Bankim used to be considered as one of the glaring figures

who have set the Bengali literature apart from its provincial narrow circumference and put it into the wider scope of national focus. In this connection, Munshi Premchand once remarked in a letter to Sri Priyo Bonjon Sen of Bengal, 'Bengali literature is no longer a provincial literature. Great-Literateurs or writers never hail from a province or a country. Since we are living in a single country, we must feel proud of Bankim as much as we do of Iqbal or Josh (Hans, Premchand Sariti Ank, p 897-8, 1937). But the Bengali Muslims remember him for some of his novels and fictions in which he tried to depict the Muslim characters, both ^{male} and female, as mere debauchees, or lewd. That Bankim did furnish his good number of novels and fictions in the name of 'historical novels' seeming to have scope or allowance to demoralise any character if the novelist liked to, has no bearing on historical realities. Thus, his role in distorting the historic Muslim figures has been duly noticed in a number of his books, like Durgeshnandini, Anand Math and Raj Singh. Durgeshnandini depicts Ayesha, the most central figure among the female characters, openly proclaiming her love to Jagat Singh a Hindu by calling him her 'praneshwar' (the life-god), Katloo Khan as a lewd as being stabbed to death by a Hindu woman, Bimala, etc. In 'Raj Singh' Aurangzeb is a hypocritical anti-Hindu, pact breaker, sieged in a rock-tunnel by the army of Raj Singh, an alm-beggar for a piece of loaf-ran away from the sight of Raj Singh like a flogged dog with its tail on the back, on one hand, and love-adorer of an ordinary Hindu youngster, on the other. Whereas, Zehen-nisse, a daughter of Aurangzeb is shown as not only a wanton youth

but also as much lustful as undoubtedly competing in her sex-fulfilment against her own paternal aunt. And, in 'Ananda Math', a Muslim Character, Reza Khan is being held responsible for the incidence of the historic famine of 1176 (according to Bengali calendar).

All the more, there existed a number of contemporary books of this kind. The basic subject-matter corresponds to that of Bankim's books which may include Kali Krishna Lahiri's 'Rat-Shanare' (1869)¹² Ramesh Chandra Dutta's 'Madhabi Kenkan' (1877)¹³, Bhudeb Mukherjee's 'Aengooriyo Binimoy' (1857)¹⁴ Manilal Gangooly's 'Bharate Bidooshi'¹⁵ (The learned Lady of India (1909), Sunitee Deb's 'The Beautiful Princess' (1918).¹⁶ In each of these books, there is a Muslim female character being tied in love with a Hindu character. Such fabrications have been refuted by a good number of writers of later days, like, Sir Jadunath Sarkar (The Love-affairs of Zeban-nissa; 1917, in Modern Review)¹⁷, Brajendra Nath Banerjee, a famous biographer (The Mongol Bidooshi),¹⁸ Qazi Abdul Wadood (Bankim Chandra in 'Sheshwets'),¹⁹ Anis-Uzzaman (Muslim Menas o Bangla Sahitya)²⁰, Mustafa Noor-ul Islam, (Introduction in Muslim Bangla Samayeeek Dotra, 1969),²¹ Ismail Hossain Sirazi (Muselman o Hindu Lekhok in Islam Procharok)²² Saiyad Abu Mohammad Esmail Hossain (Sirazi)²³ ('Sahitya -Shakti o Jasti Sangathon', 'Nebo Noor'), etc. Yet, such literature gradually lessens the sense of self-respect in the educated section of the Muslim community, and naturally this will have much more impact on younger generations still within the boundary of school.

(iv) Another most important problem of rural education is concerned with the limitations and restrictions on admission put by the Government. First of all, the growth of pupils does not correspond to the number of institutions. Therefore, there are heavy pressures of the admission-seekers on the existing institutions which fail to accommodate all of them. Secondly, new policy has been adopted by the Government in the education system. According to this policy, a graduate, who failed to secure honours or who never offered honours' courses, is not granted admission in the post-graduate courses. This way, large numbers of willing students lie outside the boundary of post-graduate institutions. To enable these students, the policy also contains a provision. They will have to undergo a special honours-course for two years and secure honours. It means, securing of honours that can hardly fetch one an eligibility to apply for admission to M.A./M.Sc./M.com. or any other courses of this kind takes to one at least five years time for completing the graduation courses. This is so difficult task for one to perform that he can easily comply with. Therefore, most of the graduates of the current generation squarely abstain from offering special honours courses for obtaining a mere eligibility during another two years for the following reasons.

The first and foremost is the fact that the entire fabric of social network has already smelled the air of industrial advancement

leading to huge economic prosperity, and has been instilled that time is important and its immediate utilisation should be made in order to achieve economic prosperity. As a result, Sahabanchak people, rather, accepted to get involved in retailing or any other calling. Another important reason is that people in general are not so economically prosperous that they can afford so much time and money for an academic improvement. Many commented, 'had I become so rich as required in the compliment of the honour course, would not I have been in some better institution away from this bonus one?' It indicates that the people of Sahabanchak, in general, have developed a dissatisfaction with the present policy adopted in education, and that the importance of modern education being imparted in Schools, colleges or even universities is hardly able to touch them.

The next most important reason is the fact that those who had obtained a special honours degree are always stratified vertically below those who have had honours degree during a normal time-period (3 years). Keeping in view this fact even many academicians do not allow their wards to prosecute such studies. Therefore, it is confined only to those who have enough time and money, on one hand, ^{and} there is absence of an avenue to involve themselves in, on the other. This sometimes looks mere luxury or foppishness in some cases. I met a very little such cases throughout Sahabanchak. Now I record only one case, because I was closely consulted with what to do with furthering studies after the graduation degree devoid of honours.

Yet, another important reason that causes dwindling Muslim education in Sahabanchek includes the processes of communalisation and politicisation of admissions, as pointed out by the most of my Muslim informants. Data-support can not be presented for this education-dimension because of my failure to obtain reality existing in the admission-processes in schools and higher institutions either. But every Muslim household, holding no political support or influence over admission-authorities, suffers this consequence, and therefore fails to educate its inmates to the degree it is able to afford. Its simple reason is that most of the institutions lying within the cost-bearing capacity of Sahabanchek people are organized on the so-called secular lines by the Hindu academicians. Since, these institutions are virtually autonomous and almost round through the hands of their Head academicians, designated as Head Master (Principal in equivalence), an autocratic system in admissions comes to exist almost openly. There is an illustrating case in hand that is related to admission to XI standard. When all the process was completed, and admissions were on, I approached the Hindu Head Master of ^a school holding lists of new intakes. He benignly showed me a list which contained the 11th name to be of ^{Muslim} my candidate. Thanking him much I retraced upto the threshold, and heard his voice, 'but this does not guarantee admission; better you check the list again on your next visit. I never went to trouble the Head Master thereafter, but came to know afterwards that the 11th No. in the list contained another name. Such examples are not few, but are also enriched by certain cases where Muslim testees being

weaker than their Hindu rivals failed to figure in the list. However, likelihood or probability of being communally discriminated against, produced a deep despair and disappointment in the Muslim minds, in Sahabanchak, on the whole.

Such examples of communalisation of education still fall smaller in the country or in the state where there are large number of instances of communal politics and/or political communalism. However, we must confine this point to the state boundary, so that these processes could be fairly readily understandable. It is all concerned with the historic conversion of Muslims' minority institutions into Hindu institutions in the name of secular ideals.

There were a number of minority institutions exclusively meant for Muslim girls including Sakhawet Memorial Girls' School, Lady Breborne Girls' College, ^{Maulana} Islamic College (now/Azad College) etc. as the major ones. Now all these institutions have lost their minority character and have been converted into secular institutions. As a result, Muslim girls have no access to them, and are increasingly lagging behind. For example Sakhawet Girls School has its 'Strength little more than 1,300. Of the total, Muslim Bengali speaking girls hardly number ten. Most of these girls are hailing from the political gentry, some being daughter of Com. Abdul Bari Biswas, some being Com. Mansoor Habibullah's relative, and so on. In addition, there are about fifty Muslim girls who gained access to the school on the basis of their option for Urdu division. Since, non-muslim girls do not at

all wish Urdu to be her medium and avoid entering into, these Muslim girls get those seats exclusively.²⁴ Though this school was founded and built up by the Muslims of Bengal. Beghom Pokasa being the most prominent figure who spent her own money and time on this establishment is now hardly remembered for. However soon after partition in 1947, the Congress Government shattered its autonomy and demolished its minority character.²⁵ Such communal attitudes of the Government often threatens the minority mentalities in matters of education and culture. The present point about one of the most important problems faced by the whole Muslim community is the deep illiteracy and ignorance among the woman folk of this community of Sahabanchak. Asked about why Muslims are increasingly lagging in education behind other communities like Hindu, one graduate young lady commented "The root of the backward state of Muslim education lies in some neglected part of the Muslim society i.e. woman section. Socio-economic insolvency is not as much important a reason as woman's illiteracy is. I remained for years closely connected with some women uplift society and observed during my visits to villages that most of the village women (nearly cent per cent) are illiterate. If the whole women population that constitutes about a half of the total numerical strength lies outside the lustre of education, then it deducts about half of the whole literacy existing among the all Muslims. As a result those families in which the mothers are illiterate and cannot help children's studies, fail to impart education to their members." This view of her I

thoroughly took down signifies that a family having illiterate mother cannot socialise its members, as because many sociologists regarded family as the cornerstone of society. And, according to Murdock's observation of the universal functions of family- sexual, reproductive, economic and educational,- Such a family which doesnot have literate mother fails to discharge its one of the most basic functions i.e. educational.

For this reason, majority of the drop-out and non-attendance appeared in such families. Its dire consequence is the more women illiteracy emerging in most of the Muslim families of Sahabanchek. As an answer to the question why this trend is (growing illiteracy among Muslim Women), most of my women informants told me that there is no exclusively any girls school to which their family girls could fearlessly be sent. There is every probability for their girls in the schools , in which there is coeducation, to deviate. Thus they percieve that only certain girls' schools can impart education to their girls, that is still a far cry in and around Sahabanchek. In fact girls schools are a pressing need for rural communities which is also felt in Sahabanchek. But no Vote-begging parties, irrespective of in power, gave so far a clean look over the women's education problems. To the contrary, they are extremely accentric, and indifferent in matters of enhancing women literacy.

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CHAPTER -V

RELIGIONS ORGANISATION

Religions Organisation : Islam is perceived as peace, purity, submission and obedience. The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root "SLM". In the religious sense, the word Islam means submission to the will of God and obedience to His Law. Only through submission to the will of God and by obedience to His Law can one achieve true peace and enjoy lasting purity. The basic belief of this religion is that there is only one God, who is called Allah. He is the Sole and sovereign ruler of the Universe. Though Allah has made Himself known through other prophets at other times, His best and final revelation was to the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the Seventh Century A.D. According to his teachings, the believer has only one life to live, and the manner in which he lives this life will determine how he spends his eternal existence. During that one life the believer must submit himself to the will of Allah. Thus the adherents of this religion are called Muslims (submitters).²

However, in order to be a Muslim, he has to accept the following basic concepts of Islam.

1. **The Concept of Faith (Iman)** : Man becomes a Muslim when he confesses belief in oneness of the True God and in Muhammad as

his Last Messenger. But faith in Islam is a state of happiness acquired by virtue of positive action and constructive conceptions as well as dynamic and effective measures. The Holy Qur'an and the Traditions of Muhammad define these required measures and establish the standards which could build up a meaningful Faith.

2. The Concept of righteousness (Birr): Islam always warns against superficial concepts and rituals, against lifeless formalities and noneffective beliefs. However righteousness is to believe in God and the last day and the angels and the Book, and the Messengers ; to spend your wealth- in spite of your love for it for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer and practice regular charity to fulfill the contracts which you have made ; and to be firm and patient, in pain and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people, the God-minded.³

3. The concept of piety (Taqwa): As always, the Quran is our best source, and when it speaks of the pious it describes them as those who believe in Unseen (which is taught by God), are steadfast in prayer, and spend of what We have provided for them; and who believe in the Revelation sent to you (Muhammad), and sent before you time, and (in their hearts) have assurance of the Hereafter. They are on true guidance from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper.⁴ The pious are those who spend (freely in way of God) whether in prosperity or in adversity ; who restrain anger and pardon (all men).⁵

4. The Concept of Prophethood : The Merciful and Loving God has sent many prophets at different times of history. Every known nation has had one prophet or more. All the prophets of God were men of good character and high honour. They were prepared and chosen by God to deliver His Message to mankind. Their honesty and truthfulness, their intelligence and integrity are beyond doubt. They were infallible in that they did not commit bias or isolate the law of God. But as mortals, they might have made unintentional mistakes in some human affairs and decisions.

5. The Concept of Life : Life^{is} a brilliant demonstration of God's wisdom and knowledge, a vivid reflection of His art and power. He is the giver and creator of life. Nothing comes to existence by chance, and nobody creates himself or anybody else. Life^{is} a dear and cherishable asset, and no sensible or normal person would like to lose it by choice. Even those who feel so desperate and take their lives by committing slow suicide, try in the last minute to regain their existence and wish to capture a second chance to live. Life is given to man by God, and He is the only Rightful One to take it back; no one else has the right to destroy a life.

6. The Concept of 'In : Islam has taken a unique on the whole issue, a position which is not shared by any other religion. The Qur'an states that Adam and Eve were directed to reside in the Garden of Eden and enjoy its produce as they please, assured of bountiful

supplies and comfort. But they were not wanted not to touch a particular tree so that they would not run into harm and injustice. Then satan intrigued them to temptation and caused them to lose their joyful state. They were expelled from the Garden and brought down to earth to live, die, and be taken out again at last for the Final Judgement. Having realised what they have done, they felt shame, guilt and remorse. They prayed for God's mercy and were forgiven.⁶ This Symbolic event is significantly revealing. It tells that the human being is imperfect and ever wanting if he were to live in paradise. But committing a sin or making a mistake does not necessarily deaden the human heart, prevent spiritual reform or stop mortal growth. Rather, every human being would try not ^{to} commit sins or mistakes which are hateful in the Eyes of God.

7. The Concept of Freedom : The fact lies in this concept is that in no human society can man free in absolute sense of the world. The Islamic concept of freedom applies to all voluntaries of man in all walks of life. Every man is born free on the fitra or in a pure state of nature. This means that man is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority, and ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the Law of God or desecrate the rights of others.

8. The Concept of Equality : Islam teaches that, in the sight of God, all men are equal, but they are not necessarily identical. There

difference of abilities, potentials, ambitions, wealth and so on. Yet more of these differences can by itself establish a status of superiority of one man or race to another.

9. The Concept of Brotherhood : The value of brotherhood is founded on the principles incorporated in the freedom and equality. Human brotherhood in Islam is based on an unshakable belief in the Oneness and Universality of God the Worshipped, the unity of mankind the worshippers, and the unity of religion the medium of worship. To God social status, national supersmanship, and racial origin are insignificant. Before him , all men are equal and brothers of one another.

10. The Concept of Peace : Islam and Peace are derived from the same root and may be considered synonymous. One of God's name is peace. The concluding words of the daily prayers of every Muslim are words of peace. The greeting of the Muslim when they return to God is peace. The daily salutations among the Muslims are expressions of peace. The adjective "Muslim" means, in a sense, peaceful. Heaven in Islam is the abode of peace.

11. The Concept of Morality : The concept of morality in Islam centres around certain basic beliefs and principles : (1) God is the creator and source of all Goodness , truth and beauty. (2) Man is a responsible, dignified and honourable agent of his creator. (3) God has put everything in heavens and the earth in the service of mankind. (4) By His Mercy and wisdom, God does not expect the

impossible from man or hold him accountable for anything beyond his power. Nor does God forbid man to enjoy the good things of life. (5) Moderation and practicality and balance are the guarantees of high integrity and sound morality. (6) All things are permissible in principle except what is singled out as obligatory, which must be observed, and what is singled out as forbidden, which must be avoided. (7) Man's ultimate responsibility is to God and his goal is the pleasure of his creator.

12. The Concept of Community : In Islam, community is not founded on race, nationality, locality, occupation, kinship or special interests. The foundation of the community in Islam is the principle which designates submission to the will of Allah, obedience to His law and commitment to His cause. In short, an Islamic community is present only when it is nourished and fostered by Islam.

However, the above basics of Islam devolve on every individual who is born in Muslim family by Muslim parents. He has now to be tested by those basics if he is a Muslim in the strict sense of the word or is merely clothed in the "Muslimism" of his forefathers or parents. Besides the degree of his adherence to his deviance from the established values and norms and principles of Islam and society. In order to know the degrees of his adherence and deviance, a number of variables relating to his religious and social ways of life can be taken up for an examination in the following manners.

1. Islam and its adherents : To the world's community of the Muslims, Islam is such a least complicated religion as it can be easily adhered to, and its adherents must get over all mundane and extramundane dangers and difficulties on its sound basis. Probably, Muslims of Sahabanchak also perceive it that way-at least they have been noticed uttering in the presence of such difficulties. 'Do not worry about the loss (of life or wealth), Allah must show His Justice one day ; and one who caused you to suffer will never be exempted from His 'Haar' (punishing verdict).' But such an opinion about man's misdeed and God's will against which is pretending his deep faith in Him and His extraordinary power to regulate man's behaviour does not enlighten his own practice and action, in most cases, Many believe that because of the dysjunction between his practice and principle (I will deal with this point in many of subsequent parts of this Chapter) a Muslim falls, easy prey of others ' humiliation and exploitation and oppression. Most of my informants seek to point out certain mischiefs of man and his sufferings, and argued that such sufferings always come to a man through the passage he made for his mundane advantages and benefits. It means that Muslims are not much on their affairs in accordance with the Laws of Islam, and therefore often incur losses of prestige, dignity, power and wealth. My informants provided to me with a number of religious spheres where most of the Muslim individuals are away from obeying the Islamic Laws.

Qurbani (Sacrifice of cow, buffalo, goat etc. showing a sacrifice of self-affection and self-emotion in the Name of Allah on Eid-al-Azha) , for example is widely practised by the Muslims. There is a law that the one-third of the whole quantity of flesh of the sacrificed object will be distributed right from the neighbours among those poor , preferably Muslims, who failed ^{to} meet the cost of Qurbani by themselves. This Law is thoroughly violated, and flesh-distribution among the poor, in the most cases, often turns into presenting gifts on Eid to the well -off relations and friends who also actively observe Qurbani , instead of the poor.

Presenting flesh, in this manner, is fostered in order to memorise, revitalise and better the past cordial connections within the people holding higher or equal social status. In order to maintain such connections most of the households do sacrifice almost more than their pocket allows. Its another purpose is that the sacrificing households do try to make such a good quantity of flesh so that they may be fed for a long period of time. This intention is found in most of the sacrificing households of Sahabanchak. Moreover, I was assured by a good number of informants that if there were no provision at all in the law about the two-thirds share in the sacrificed flesh for the sacrificer, then the number of sacrificers would have been almost zero. This could be better verified from the contributions of the same households towards the following things like

Zakat (2½% of the residue of the amount of income per year),
Khar (20% of the produce of land irrigated, while 10% of the produce of land unirrigated),

Fitrāh (nearly 10 rupees in cash per every member of the home) etc. It has been found that a Muslim individual who takes a share of Turbani costing at least 250 rupees fails to meet those religious obligations. Almost no households maintain any of them in addition to a seasonal alms-giving for a short period of harvests. As for Fitrāh, a minority of a sound number of households avoids giving Fitrāh. This way, however, almost cent per cent households of Sahabanchak transgress some of the most important basic principles mentioned earlier. Such attitudes basically weaken the economic forces of the whole community.

Mutual terms and relations among the Muslim households of Sahabanchak are another important phenomenon for a discussion 'Ghare'-ghare'neemia' (almost every household involved in litigation) is an old observation which seeks to delineate a picture of bad terms maintained in the village community over some affinal matters, like talaq, separation of spouses, dowry etc., Some property disputes, and political grievances etc. This phenomenon has been closely viewed in the larger number of Muslims than Hindus. Out of my total Muslim respondents 464 nearly 17 are involved in litigation against other 17 muslim households. And, I was told in the field that majority of the households are on bad terms with other Muslim households due to some unknown reasons : but it apparently does not look, at all. It, however , indicates that Muslims themselves are not as well united emotionally, socially and politically as they pretend.

To the contrary, Muslims in Sahabanchak vitiate their entire circle resulting into social fraction, political faction, cultural disunity and demoralisation and decivilisation. It reminds me :

"The first step taken by the European nations towards scientific advancement was to acquire the learning of the Muslim world."

"... the contribution of Islam to modern Europe was not confined to Science and Scholarship . It can be claimed in almost all fields."

"The most salient features of Western civilisation are but replication of our culture." Thus the exploiters of Islam brought lustre from it while its followers are now bringing about darkness among themselves.

2. Islam and Economic Organisation:

Muslims economic organisation comprised ,agriculture, business, employment animal husbandry, bidmasking etc. which have been discussed at some length in Chapter III. Muslims of Sahabanchak exert their utmost efforts to make as best progress as unparalleled in the whole area in all those spheres of economic organisation, so that they can purchase a piece of land every year or meet some other cash obligation. This tendency produces a stiff competitive environment which obviously gives rise to an additional aggravation in mutual terms and relations between and among neighbours and Muslims themselves. Here, they hardly care to obey the Laws of Islam and the sayings of the Prophet,

Muhammad (peace be upon him). Under the Islamic system the minance of greedy capitalism and destructive communism never arises.¹¹

'And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the balance (of Justice) in order that you may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the Balance.¹² But the fact ~~is~~ lies that the Muslims hardly put any coordination between, their religion and deeds. To the contrary, at almost every aperture of economic pursuits, Islamic laws and principles are thoroughly transgressed. Some of the economic pursuits in which Muslims' economic behaviour is visible in defiance of Islamic Laws and principles will now be taken up hereunder.

As we know that agriculture is one of the most important means of rural earning, there is sound stress on acquiring as much land as possible. Such lust for land gives often rise to sporadic uprisings with the result of bloody confrontation. I have noted a number cases of land murders that took place in Sahabanchak between Muslims. One of the murders was committed in my presence. It was about 7 a.m. Summer morning. A Saalist (dispute-settling meeting) was arranged to liquidate the dispute between two brothers' sons .They were contending over a homestead's side-portion which was complained to be grabbed by one party and erected building on. However, no sooner had the priliminary proceedings ~~at~~ of the saalist started, than both the parties came up extremely furious of making murderous attacks on each other. Even before the members of

the Sealist could hardly avoid random blows running a little away a fighting man was felled on the ground and soon fatally stabbed by his opponents. The portion of the homestead that ultimately caused the loss of human life could hardly cost in hundreds only, but its dispute eventually had cost in lakhs.

The phenomenon of land-grabbing is a very widespread one and most of the altercations in agricultural fields are on its basis. Data show as many as 70 altercation cases that have occurred in Sahabanchak within a period of one year of 1984-85. Not all of them led to murder, but most of them were so fierce to shed blood and cause loss of normal physical ability. These cases are not all concerned with owned properties. Some cases arose out of the bargadar' (tenant) - owner dispute. On the basis of rights of tenancy, an 'addhidar (tenant-at-will) grabs his owner's land by declaring him as 'bargadar' just in order to satisfy his greed for the piece or a vengeance he developed caused by some social reasons. An addhidar's growing into bargadar is very hard to be easily swallowed by an owner, and thus, there takes place land-fights between. Here, people, irrespective of religious sanctions, go on incurring all types of losses, -life, money, property, and status. At this very stage, Muslims are totally forgetful of what they do and what they ought not to do in principle and on principle.

Lust for economic gains of the Muslims is found to be involved in matters of acquisition of an employment or else. The Muslim

Another opening of economic gains being exploited by the Sahabanchak Muslims is the organisation of business firms. This phenomenon includes mainly a sense of extreme jealousy in the Muslim community. It is a general phenomenon among Muslims, and hits all affairs grappling with Muslim masses, like employment, social affairs, like marriage and kinship, social status and so on. It is more prevalent a phenomenon between Muslims than between Hindus or even between Hindus and Muslims. Because of this fact, an individual pursuing an economic task must make jealous another, and ultimately the latter must try to put an economic set-up equally matching that of the former. And once in the competitive market, both become rivals of each other, rather than of all the existing settings. This phenomenon not only deteriorated personal or interpersonal terms between but it is extremely able to brought about tension in their community life. This view about Muslims' economic pursuits has been observed by many earlier studies which all depict Sahabanchak that in almost every field of community life a Muslim is having his Muslim neighbour as his arch enemy. Many Muslim business firms around Sahabanchak are reported to be set up on the basis of mere jealousy of, and reaction to, those owned by other Muslims. There is an important example in hands to put forth here. A Muslim educated youth from Sahabanchak established a bicycles' selling and repairing shop at Basmabanager market. In view of his prospective economic prosperity, another educated youth

from a neighbouring village also established a bicycles selling and repairing shop side by side in the market, in spite of the fact that the former is a close relative of the latter (consin ; - the former's father is the brother-in-law behno of the latter's father). While enquiring after this phenomenon, one of my informants remarked, 'Muslim community is that kind of community in which father and son envy one another in their similar economic pursuits. However, this, relationship between kins and affines grows worse from bad ; hence, intercommunal ties or harmony are all a far cry, and all religious doctrines, prescriptions and restriction prove inadequate to lead them towards a peaceful and holy harmonisation.

3. Religion and Education : Coming to the present context, I am first of all, being reminded of a number, of sayings of the Prophet Mohammed in matters of importance of education and learning : 'Seek knowledge, even though it be in China , 'The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr' and 'an hour spent in study is more valuable than a year of prayer.'¹³ These sayings of the Prophet leave no doubt that education for every Muslim is indispensable so that he can lead this life in such a manner as required by the religion he adheres to. Yet, it has been already seen (in chapter 1/) that the Muslim community as a whole is plunged in illiteracy and ignorance. For this reason or the other, the Muslims fail to perform their religious duties,

like prayers, in a proper manner which has been essentialised by the Islamic Law. The manner in which most of the illiterate Muslims offer their prayer (Namaz), therefore, stands in sharp contrast to the religious rules and that it totally violates and militates against. What I found is that a Muslim devotee, who was eastwhile doing some domestic chores, asked somebody to bring him some water for Wazoo (ablution) and after making ablution entered the mosque wearing, rather, putting a *qamchha* (napkin) on the upper body rounding the right position over the left neck, and started praying. Still worse is the case with one who did his agricultural work all day long, and returning home started, for all ^{the} five times, praying, in all the dirty clothes he wore in the morning while moving out to the field. These are the popular religious habits that most of the Muslims have developed in themselves in the teeth of strong opposition of the Islamic Law. In spite of educational ignorance, they avoid listening to the Ulema or any knowledgeable persons. 'This way our forefathers have gone away praying nor we now required to obey the new rules, huh', is one of the most popular comments such illiterate Muslims use to deliver.

There are also some other religious matters where the Muslims put wrong practices because of ignorance and illiteracy. Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca as the Holy land because it is the birth place of the Prophet, Muhammad), for instance, is only performed by a few Muslims. By reason of shortage of funds needed for food and for journey most are unable. But those who

are able to bear the costs are hardly reported to have offered alms to the poor Muslims, rather than to have purchased and brought rare articles for presenting to kith and kin. Another advantage lies with pilgrimage is that a Muslim who is erstwhile called as only X.Y.Z. will now be known as Haji saheb soon after his journey to Mecca is decided. Therefore, it will not be wrong to claim that a good number of well-off Muslims are in fact having a snobbish mentality to be known as Haji. This view of my informants could be verified at a number of places, restaurant, market yard, playing ground, somebody's portico or parlour, roadside area, agricultural field, are those places where Haji Sahebs are seen just gossiping, and avoiding players even when summons is listened. Moreover, many are found during Ramadan (the fifth month of the Islamic calendar during which the Muslim faithfuls are keeping fast) avoiding keeping fast on pretexts of dyspeptic ailment or other serious physical troubles.

Thus educational illiteracy is, sometimes, more deepened by some gluttonous and avaricious so-called ulema than by the illiterate Muslim masses themselves. Out of their vested interests, they put forth wrong fatwah (God's Decree or Ordinance) before the ignorant masses to extract from them sound amount of money out of baitul maal (pulled property within a certain community for alm-giving out of the sale of raw hides of sacrificed objects, etc.). In order to exhibit one's ignorant sentiment, they also

produce wrong impression about the Islamic perception of the progress and advance in the field of science and technology. I personally witnessed an aalem of this type who comforted an old Muslim devout by saying, 'Moon is the lustre of Allah. Its reach is only accessible to Allah Himself, He keeps it within his own jurisdiction. How can man reach the moon? These are the sayings of the Kafeers (unfaithfull) just to obscure the power and reach of Allah.'

Apart from this type of Ullema, there is another section of so-called religious scholars who are well educated on religious as well as modern lines. Occurance of jalsa (typically known as religious meetings arranged for delivering Gods Ordinances and Decree, prophets sayings, and Qur'an and Hadith) is one of the frequent religious activities among the Muslim people. Maulvis (the preacher in the public jalsa) are chosen from among the learned and pious men. Besides some moulevis hail from some nearby areas, some are hailing from some remote areas who meanwhile earned a name in this field. Most of these moulevis are found very benign and moderate in charging the fare (also an honourarium in addition, is usually given). But there are some of them who consider such a call to them as 'a golden sack' and charge like anything. Some of them even put their charges before the organisers of jalsa before fixing a date on which they will be available. So to speak these so-called maulvis accepted this religious task as their principal occupation, and trying to make money riding roughshod over other's

feelings and expectations. To the contrary this type of religious preachers seem to assume religious leadership of the whole community. One maulvi while extracting his desired amount of so-called honorarium revealed that he is running a university-like institution for imparting modern and religious education to Muslim youth out of his own pocket ; therefore his demand of money by this means is thoroughly justifiable . Thus , this type of maulvis exploit the ignorance of the illiterate Muslims in the name of religion and religious education.

It goes without saying that this section of so-called religious leaders became able to enslave mentally a vast portion of Muslim population ; a large number of the enslaved population came to assume vague conceptions about the modern education. As far as modern education, what they say is that it is wholly based on Hindu creed, culture and mythology, and Muslim pupils are compelled to learn them all by heart, whereas they got no opportunity to know about Islamic creed, culture and Laws and principles. This view, rather, alludes to abstention from modern education and adherence to religious education, than advances a view about a demand for revision of the Syllabi being followed in education centres. In this connection Smith notes : 'Such traditions, with many more of similar purport , make a persuasive display in the case for Islam's Scholarliness . Traditions (the

entire mass of which is far beyond the layman's grasp) are quoted entirely/^{and} libitum, and usually without reference ; selections from the whole are made on no critical principle whatever, but purely on an apologetic basis. For this reason the modern bourgeois who meets only this selected ones, has no idea of the remainder, forms for himself an impression of Islam that is entirely and without suoterfuge on his part in consonance with the liberalism which he unconsciously professes. It must be remembered, of course, that traditions such as the above quoted, explicitly and implicitly, not to urge the Muslims themselves to learning because they recognise Islam as determinitive, but to urge them to devote themselves to Islam since they recognise learning as valuable.¹⁴ But my findings in religious circles stand in sharp contrast to even the 'determinitive value' of Islam accepted by Muslims as claimed by Smith. I could gather a number of cases of Muslim marriage all of which were ceremonised in defiance of the established law of Islam. According to Law, Muslim marriage can not take^{place} between grandmother (naani aur deedi) and grandson (naati paternal / maternal) between brother in law /sister in grand father / grand mother and this grand father's /grand mother's grand daughter /grand son, etc. But as many as ten cases involving such^{have} kins^{have} been listed in Sahabanchak. Another case relates marriage preceded by an incest between a remote uncle and niece from the same blood which was brought to light by the extremely mature

pregnancy of the girl. Both types of marriages are devoid of religious sanctions and thus are far from valid. Such cases are the clear index of profound illiteracy and ignorance both in modern as well as religious education, on the whole.

4. Religion and women: Muslim woman constitutes an important segment in world civilisation so far as her varying status in one civilisation from her status in another civilization is concerned. As a result, she is not treated in every religion equally. There are good numbers of literary pieces defining woman's status in various religions of the world. However, one of them is 'Nareer Mulya' (The value of woman) by Sharat Chandra Chatterjee.¹⁵ Chatterjee tried to trace out the exact status of woman under all the major religions of the world, and showed that the status of woman is much inferior to that of man under all those religions except under Islam. Chatterjee, however, writes, "Exemption (of woman-oppression) is found only in Islamic religion. ... the fact can not be denied that Muhammad asked (mankind) to treat the women folk in esteem forbade to create gulf of differences between sons and daughters, and to deal with especially the widows - whose conditions were the worst and the most helpless among the Arabs and Jews - with commiseration and justice. Indeed, there can not be any doubt that the 'nabe-dharma' (neo-religion) of Saudi-Arabia has thousand times ameliorated the status of woman in comparison with the women's tormenting conditions of

the earlier times".

Coinciding with this view of Sharat chandra Chatterjee, Abdabi¹⁵ defined women's status at various places in Islam.

1. Women is recognized by Islam as a full and equal partner of man in the procreation of humankind. He is the father; she is the mother, both are essential for life. 2. She is equal to man in bearing personal and common responsibilities and in receiving rewards for ^{her} deeds. 3. She is equal to man in the pursuit of education and knowledge. When Islam enjoins the seeking of knowledge upon Muslims, it makes no distinction between man and woman. 4. She is entitled to freedom of expression as much as man is. 5. Historical records show that women participated in public life with the early Muslims, especially in times of emergencies (warfare). 6. Islam grants woman equal rights to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently. Her life, her property, her honour are as sacred as those of men. 7. Islam does not state these rights in a statistical manner and then relax. It has taken all the measures to safeguard them and put them into practice as integral articles of Faith. It never tolerates those who are inclined to prejudice against woman or discrimination between man and woman. Time and again, the Quran reproaches those who used to believe woman to be inferior to man.¹⁶ 8. Islam has given her a share of inheritance.

In the light of the above facts shown in the literature, one has to be thoroughly convinced that Muslim women do possess a high status in Islamic Tradition and are not at all subservient to men in any respect of those mentioned above. Even then, there are misconceptions about women's status in Islam. For instance, Hornbeck, Ricaut and others believe that according to Muslims, women do not possess soul, and therefore are treated as animals.¹⁹ As for working women, some writes, "It is seen that discrimination starts at a very early age, and the socialisation of girls stresses the mother-wife role. Taking up an economic role outside the family may be important for the social status of the Muslim women within the family. It raises the possibility of economic independence and a say in decision-making. However, the economic role is constrained by the traditional status which puts them in a disadvantage with regard to wages. Although, the women want to assert themselves, they can not do so because they are paid less wages. The patterns noticed in the case of Muslim women ...also apply to Hindu women working outside the home....Their inferior status restricts them to their role as child-bearers and child-rearers, and even when they are employed, they enter a sex-typed market."²⁰

However, keeping in view the above bilateral and contradictory views about women's various statuses, we shall now deal with some important aspects of life of human kind in general and of womanhood in particular which will ultimately draw a single conclusion about realities lying in the status of Muslim women of Sahabanchak.

Nearly half of the Muslim population (64) comprises women. Nearly hundred percent women are confined to the role of mother and wife. With a little exception, none of them may even dream of any other role. Therefore, they mostly live in dependency in all matters relating to family organisation, fertility, child's socialisation, marriage etc. economic organisation or family economy and all others. According to my informants, only 6-9 Muslim women (whose number even fails to make a percentage among the 10,000 Muslims) have so far taken up an economic role, and moving out for a nominal earning in some private sector, like V standard school etc. They hardly earn 200/300 rupees per month. Their economic role is not at all based on the desire for asserting their importance in any walk of life. To the contrary, they take up such a job just in order to improve family funds so that they can, in an easier manner, make both the ends meet. And so far as assertion is concerned, there is a number of women who are always noted in their circle for their whimpering and quarrelsome parts and guts, regardless of illiterate. I know a case. A woman educated upto pre-university course married a fellow-student of herself in a court by falling in love. She is as whimpering as could be known as 'a belle' to her fellow-generians. Love or adoration as the basis of marriage began to wither immediately after the marriage was ceremonised in the court on fixation of mehr (bride money) of 50,000 rupees lying due. Once she entered the groom's house (in Sahabanchak), she began to poke her nose into everyone's business in view of almost total illiteracy at the house except one being her husband (upto her education level).

This produced intolerably severe tension between brothers-in-laws and parents-in-laws and resulted in spouses, departure to Bangladesh. After about two years both returned and started a business at Baishnabnagar. But all this still failed to do the familial disharmony away, and caused their separation and shift to the Baishnabnagar's environs. But that too did not suit to her for her quarrelling calibre and placed them again at their original place in Sahabanchak. During the course of about ten years, she used to be reported to have beaten or slapped her husband quite a number of times simply because of her domineering attitude. This attitude sprang out of the amount of mehr which she could at pleasure produce the claim for before her husband. Solely for this reason, he used to keep mum and taciturn at her all the times' oppression or playing rouses even when his parents were being disparaged and humiliated, or his siblings.

However, this point does not illustrate the point of woman's sense of assertion, and therefore the above case shall be held in exception. The usual cases are fully concerned with a single sense of the womanhood of ^{being} subservient to man folk as a rule. As a result, all the matters-social and /or economic-are decided by the males. The males even seek to have no feeling that the women are also the units of the same family and their participation in family life situation is an unfailing necessity. Riding roughshod over woman's feelings or reaction, all the familial needs, like reproduction of children with its number,

marriage of children etc. , economic affairs, like agricultural land-purchase or sale, number of cattle be kept or sold or purchased etc children's socialisation, like education in modern centres or religious centres children's occupational matters, like bidmasking, trading, retelling or agricultural labour etc. are all unilaterally decided by the males. Still there are a few families in Sahabanchak in which male sometimes utters in soliloquy "probably, the boy shall be a better earner in trading; or my girls would-be father-in-laws family will match ours : or 'the children should be better put in a 'Bangle-podha' school (modern education centre)" etc. in the presence of his wife breast-feeding or just resting. Otherwise in rest of the society on the whole, the males even feel shameful of giving the females some hearings.

Thus, it comes to light that as women are freed with the men to assume any responsibilities in those matters they do not have to be overburdened at all other than child bearing and rearing. This will be a wrong inference if one so does. Fact, however, lies that woman remains thoroughly engrossed in domestic chores dawn to dusk. A woman in fact, puts much more work a day than a man does. What a man does, in most cases, includes only those sorts of work which are practically impossible for a woman, such as tilling, harrowing and breaking the clodes of land, a door-to-door-basis trading in cattle, grain, jute, etc. reaping and harvesting crops, slaughtering animals (cows goats etc). All

these sorts of domestic tasks donot mean to be the major ones for organising an agricultural household. An agricultural household for its smooth running requires much more sorts of work be done everyday which all now normally devolve on the womanhood..

Before we come to the context of those domestic tasks done by females, we shall have a look at what has been imbedded in every one's mind that females are meant for child-bearing and childrearing under male domination. Male domination has been long justified by Manu, the Hindu law giver by saying "when young, she should be in the control of her father in her youth of her husband. When the husband dies, she should be in the protection of her sons. She should not love independence. She should never desire separation from her father, husband or children."²¹ Whether or not this code is, in recent times, true of the prevailling state of Hindu male domination over female is hardly concerned with the thrust of our present context. But, we must like one to locate such an element as incorporated the code of Manu is true of male domination over female in Muslim society Sahabanchak. That is what necessitates a precise focus on those tasks and responsibilities imposed on by the male and/or assumed by the female.

As far as my date and field situation are concerned, I dare to say that none of the tasks done by woman irrespective of male tasks, is imposed by force on woman. Rather, womenfolk, who are all blind to scriptural codes and ordinances and to the

dynamics of the world caused by total ignorance and illiteracy, developed such a notion about relieving her husband or children in putting labour in those domestic tasks possibly done within the homestead. She took in hands a number of domestic works from his hands in lieu^{of} her rest to him. Thus a number of tasks which were erstwhile known to be the male tasks have been converted into female tasks. They, however, include filling trough in water, crumbling straw^{and} greases as animal feed, kneading feed in troughful water, caring cattle thereafter, collecting 'pat-kathi' (woody stalk of jute plant) as fuel, clearing and drying 'koal' (cow house) etc. as the major ones. None of the male or female knows whether or not this pattern of family organisation does really go beyond the laws and rules of Islam, on one hand, and against the dignity and status of the women, on the other. That is why nearly ninety five per cent household of Sahabanchek are sustaining this pattern. The remaining five per cent households which have more and highly educated members are away from its practice among themselves but are not able to educate and enlighten others about what the shariah (Islamic jurisprudence) says against such indignifications of womanhood. But it is a cry in the wilderness. One can be assured that had those tasks still being carried out by the male been made possible to be done by the female, the male would, hundred percent, have washed their hands clean off.

Coming to the other sorts of tasks which are inherent in the female role almost since her birth in the Muslim community, it is

assure by the field data that no community can easily match the Muslim community. While the height of amelioration in female's socio-economic condition under the Christian-atheist influence strikes us, that under Islamic theist influence stings all badly. One Ushe²² reviewed a book titled Soviet Women of early 1920s writing "The liberation of women was achieved first of all by laying the material foundations for it in the shape of collective farms and economic planning under public ownership of industry. To allow for the equal participation of women in economic activity of the Communist Party also had to wage a battle against male prejudices both within and without the Party". As a result, "Today there are more women engineers in the Soviet Union than in the rest of the world and the USSR is the only place where women have achieved actual equality in the numbers in professional employment. Women are fifty two percent of all employed college trained people corresponding exactly to their share of population of the working age groups" Moreover, "Even in areas where women are far from equality, they are way ahead of the women in other countries." But we view (at the close of 1980s) on the threshold of 2000 A.D. that our women bearing of loads on heads are diving into deep mire-gorge. Such loads are innumerable, the major ones of which are in this following manners.

My informants hold that Muslim women in Sahabanchak are tied to the grindstone of domestic work at dawn and are let off when all the males are pinned to bed at night. During this period

a woman carries out hundreds of tasks which are all acknowledged and recognised to be the female ones. They, however, do all these works even having no sense of objection because they are already made to feel that their sex is meant for rendering varied services to the male sex. This much can be said in this regard that the women in Muslim society Sahabanchak are exempted only from being forced in flesh-trade. This situation did never emerge, nor can it arise, in Sahabanchak more because the potent husbands just want to lay their own bhogya drobya (object of sexual entertainment) aside from other's voluptuous grab, than because there are religious restrictions on flesh-trade.

Apart from all those aspects discussed above on Women's various statuses in principle and in practice, we shall throw some light on the food-habit systems of the male and the female. Here is the stage where the height of inhumanity of the male has been traced too. Most of the male-dominated households are totally indifferent to the eating desires of the females. Therefore, in most cases, the womenfolk are always deprived of the food-items of higher and costlier quality, like, fish, meat, sweetmeat, fruits, milk, ghee, butter, egg etc. Lying under compulsion, they try to suppress this desire in the manner ' I must eat, when Allah will bestow in abundance. Let the husband and children be fed now, Allah will feed me.' As a result, such women are fed from among those abounding matters which are left out as refuse or as excessive

amount. Such an eating desire to their heart's[?] content does not seem to be satisfied unless the Eid (especially, Eid-el- azha) comes on. Therefore, Eid is awaited by them not^{less} than by the poorest, in actuality.

5. Islam and Social milieu :

Till recently there existed sound communal harmony in West Bengal. Both the major religious communities, Hindu and Muslim, used to coexist so cooperatively that it became for one almost impossible to distinguish a Muslim from a Hindu on the basis of their socio-cultural (except religious, marital etc.) political and economic exchanges. Such cooperative intercommunal exchanges spread throughout the length and breadth of the State soon after it came under the administrative authority and power of the Left Front as its Government once again in 1977.

The period since 1977 till recently has been noticed and denoted for a fair channel of intercommunal interaction, cooperation and congeniality between Hindu and Muslims. However this attractive behavioural pattern of the religionists appealed not only to the West Bengal mass, but some young writers as well. Therefore, both the sections saw upon it in cordial esteem. One, however, writes, "Some states of the country, like West Bengal, had long been fostering, to the best possible extent, the communal harmony. Even this state used to be cited as an example for its capability of maintaining of

of peaceful terms and brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims.²³ Moreover, people (Hindu and Muslim) in general used to comment in view of incidence of communal violence at various places, like, Muradabad, Meerut, Aligarh, Jamshedpur, Baroda, Gujarat, Bhivandi, etc. "All these places badly require C.P.I.(M) Government for the sole reason, for the general Muslim masses of West Bengal believed deeply that this Government would protect their lives, chastity and properties, and that they voted for this party en bloc, during last two consecutive general elections since 1977. Although, the decisive factors for its victories in those elections were not ^{as} a sole one/claimed by the masses, yet the party started its organisation from the grass roots- village level politics- for making them its political base, and allowed some relief in their social milieu. Now Muslims were not as hesitant as in the pre-'77 era to start praying in the public wearing beard, and doing *iftaar* (breaking of fast at sunset during Ramadan) in restaurant or hotel, at railway stations, or other public places. They now forgot to hide their Muslim identity (religious), like name or parentage etc. On the other hand, they ameliorated all their economic and social conditions by dint of business, education, employment etc, and pretended to an extent, coping with their counterparts hand in glove in almost all the rural or semi-urban settings one of which is our present study area, Sahabanchak. Therefore, Sahabanchak too could enjoy all those glowing features of communal harmony until 1986.

But the period after 1986 during which the entire harmony system ^{between} / the religionists has been turned upside down is marked

by the emergence of certain reactionary forces in and on the outskirts of Sahabanchak. The degree to which the Hindu and Muslims were interlocked in economic and social organisations has been sharply left down and behind by the present degree to which the Hindus and Muslims are dichotomised in all walks of life because of the appearance of such forces. In fact, RSS has pointed out the Muslim masses to the Hindu masses as their sole adversaries and major obstacles in matters of all socio-political walks of life. RSSs branching out in almost every village along with its bloodstirring slogans at all its nearby training camps convinced the Hindus that the Muslims are among those people who not only ruled over Hindustan for nearly thousand years, but also oppressed and forcibly converted the Hindustanis i.e. the Hindu population. Therefore, no Hindu individual should rather carry on good terms with any Muslim individual, then should try to activate the organisation and its motive of ousting the Muslims. Although the extent to which the RSS laid its hopes about aggravating normal terms and connections with the Muslims for their eviction, could not be made successful, nor could the Hindus be so more fierce than the RSS wanted, yet it has been found that Muslims presence or company is deliberately avoided by the Hindus earstwhile remained their friends. On the other hand, those Hindus who were maintaining a talking or wishing term now started overlooking these Muslims. As a result of this, at all the places of human activities-market places, business centres, schools, village life, interest or

pressure-group organisation and else- the population of Sahabanchak ^{on} is cuevein-/the basis of Hindu and Muslim divisions and fractions. Whether or not this policy or principle being duly followed by the local Hindus is strictly being followed up by the RS leaders. If a Hindu individual is marked violating this principle, he is liable, to be harshly warned, and shall be guarded against. There have been found some unique cases that illustrate this point. A muslim friend was invited to dine in a marriage party arranged by a Hindu at his house. The Muslim in due time reached the venue and met a cold reception that aroused in him a sense of humiliation and made him leave soon. Though, the Hindu friend knew well that his Muslim friend was yet to dine, he saw him presenting 'joutook' (marriage gift) and departing from the party, but let him off quite unfed. Thereafter, they met each other several times, but no talk could be on the marriage and the marriage party any more. There have been counted about fifteen cases of this nature and kind that have all ultimately resulted into bringing about an end to the mutual relations between two religionists.

Though such fractions between Hindus and Muslims did not so far lead to any fierce battle on the communal grounds in Sahabanchak, yet it can be said that incidence of communal violence of other places in Malda or West Bengal in particular, and in some parts of the country in general, is no far to be preceded in Sahabanchak. Its chances have been produced by the communal forces of the RS,

on one hand, and are being by and by enhanced by Governments - Central as well as State themselves. While the masses are looking out for help, protection and peace from the Governments, the Chief whips, of the Governments are redressing their political and religious injuries under the communal canopies. A few examples will be sufficient to understand this point. The Prime Minister, Rajib Gandhi was present in the Convocation of Shanti Niketan held on 10 April, 1934. In spite of being extremely busy in the function, he managed to spare time to fly to the Belure Math, the headquarters of the Ram Krishana Missions, and visited Swami Abheyananda (alias Sherat Maharaj).²⁴ The Telegraph, dated 13 April, 1934, witnessed that Swami Abheyananda gave instructions and advices to take care of himself in dealing with Punjab, Orissa and Assam problems. Rajib Gandhi also welcomed all instructions and advices given by Abheyananda.²⁵ Besides, Rajib Gandhi is also shown to be present in various temples, like Tirupati etc, wearing blood-marks on the forehead. Many believe that his frequent visits to various temples and reactionary figures and conversations with, are closely related to the Katre Masjid incident of the 24 June, 1933 which ^{had} claimed about one thousand lives.²⁶

Another example is concerned with some Left Front's front line leaders keeping in view the Indian minorities, such as

Muslim, Sikh, Christian, as a live problem, Namboodripad proclaimed in the All India Democratic Youth Federation held at Calicut between 20 and 23 February 1984, "It is not possible to fight the majority communities before we fight back the minority communities"²⁷ This statement of Namboodripad was wholeheartedly congratulated by the RSS²⁸ alongwith a comment - C.P.I.(M) is gradually nearing the RSS'. And, fact lies that many as other chief whips including Chief Minister of the State ministry, Mayor Kamal Basu, a minister, Shri Ram Chatterjee, another minister, Jotin Chakroborty and so on are being accused of more and more tilting towards the most communal block of the RSS. In view of this fact the C.P.I.(M)'s noted leader, B.T. Pandive said, "The C.P.I.(M) leaders of West Bengal ought to, and should, be restored secular mindedness in stead of Hindu sentiment and affection. Pandive added that when a Parsi Communist leader, Senoor Bakalwala, on the ground of "his personal faith" visited a temple and he was told that 'communist can not have any affairs in the name of personal. The Party is everything for him.'²⁹

However, the indifference of the political leaders (in governments) towards the growing communal disharmony and sympathy for, and tilt towards, the rapid growth of communal forces being obtained and organised by the RSS has produced a two-way effects on the minds of Hindus and the Muslims of Sehebanchak. Hindu youth grew much more rude and rough of treating others in general, and Muslims in

particular. They talk in such a manner as if they are in a fighting mood and will break out in violence at once. Therefore, none but the very close and well-known persons dare to be frank and familiar with these youth. Their appearance at various places, like training camp, at the 'Sat Sang' sessions, along with the RSS trainers and leaders roaming through villages wearing red turban on the head and blood mark on the forehead also generates fear in man's mind. Their carrying metal weapon at the training camps and shouting slogans seems to be a matter of consternation indeed.

On the other hand on the Muslims have started losing their faith in communist party ^{and} the congress (I). Many have even decided to withdraw their support from the Left Front and the Congress (I) Governments and enclose with any other party that will never place them in despair and uncertainties. For this reason, the Muslim League came to raise its head in the troubled waters, and began to participate in voting process and elections. Besides, its religio-political views at the village level gained popularity to an extent, and its organisation is on the increase, though at a low ebb. It is also popularised among some of the Muslim communists. Though such communists do not give it support politically, they in good faith believe in its real necessity vis-a-vis the RSS' anti-Muslim organisations. Thus the feeling about the RSS as a major threat, Muslims now laying heads together in various

social crises, and many feel that the only a single way to cope with, or tackle, the problem is to mobilise the whole Muslim country to raise and maintain a counterforce against the RSS, be it under the banner of the Muslim League or else. This way the value of national integration or communal harmony is decreasing day by day in Sahabanchek. Thus at present, abounding fuel is ready and is needing a little flame to flare-up in no time to lay waste Sahabanchek and its outlying area inhabited by both the religionists, Hindus and Muslims. All this situation among the Muslims and between Hindus and Muslims has developed by militating against the principles of religious scriptures -be it a Qur'an or Gita or else.

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CHAPTER - VI

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

To evaluate political role and status of the Muslim community in Sahabanchek, it is necessary to look at the political life sanctioned by Islamic Law, so that their action in any field may be identified if it is Islamic or is vitiated and influenced by certain other factors in their circle and circumference.

According to Hammudah Abdalati,¹ the political life of Islam is based on sound spiritual and moral foundations, and is guided by Divine instructions. The political system of Islam is unique in its structure, its functions, and its purpose. It is not pragmatic or instrumentalistic. It is not theocracy whereby a certain class of people assumes divine rights, hereditary or otherwise, and poses, above other citizens, beyond accountability. Nor is it/^aproletariat whereby some revengeful labourers capture power. It is something different from all that. To appreciate the political outlook of Islam one has only to know that it is based on the following principles:

1. Every deed of the Muslim individual or group of individuals must be inspired and guided by the law of God. If they do fail to judge (or rule) according to what God has revealed, they are the unbelievers...they are the wrong doers ... they are the rebels.²

3. The aim of the Islamic State is to administer justice and provide security and protection for all citizens, regardless of colour or race or creed, in conformity with the stipulations of God in His constitution, the Qur'an.

4. Formed for the ^{purposes and established} above mentioned, to enforce Law of God, the Islamic State can not be controlled by any political party or non Islamic platform or subjected to foreign powers. It has to be independent to exercise its due authority on behalf of God and in His cause.

5. The ruler, any ruler, is not sovereign over the people. He is a representative employer chosen by people and derives his authority from his obedience to the Law of God, the Law which binds the Supervisor.

6. The rulers and administrators from among the best qualified citizens on the basis of their merits of virtue, fitness and competence. Racial origin or family prestige and financial status do not in themselves make any potential candidates more or less qualified for high public offices.

7. After the people make their choice through election or selection of their ruler, every citizen is enjoined to supervise, with his means, the conduct of administration and question its handling of public affairs, wherever he

he see anything wrong with it. If the administration betrays the trust of God and the public, it has no right to continue in office.

8. Though appointed by the people, the ruler's first responsibility is to God and then to people.

9. Although the Qur'an is the Constitution, Muslims are ordained by God to handle their common affairs through consultative method.

10. Under the political system, every citizen is entitled to enjoy freedom of belief and conscience, and freedom of thought and expression

11. The governorship is a public trust, to which the administrators are entrusted by the word of God as well as by the common consent of the people. With God being the supreme sovereign of the State, whoever represents Him in the top office must be faithful to Entrusting Authority, must be a believer in God.

The immediately preceding Chapters, especially III, IV, and V, that have singled out and highlighted numerous social aspects inherent in the organisation of economic,

educational socio-religious life of the Muslim community in general and in particular, of India and of Sahabanchak. Vis-a-vis those aspects inherent in Hindu Socio-economic-religious life, have immense clear bearings on the political life and action of the Muslim community in Sahabanchak. It has been mentioned earlier that Sahabanchak is an administrative division of fragments and forms an Anchal Panchayat constituency comprising a number of villages. A village is represented by at least its one elected member (known as panchayat member) in the Anchal Panchayat headed by a Pradhan. Sometimes, a single village is represented by more than one member but less than three-according to its population. As a result, seven villages elect ^{one} ~~one~~ panchayat members each while the remaining three villages elect two members each, thus numbering thirteen members in all. These thirteen members vote for a single Pradhan and an Upa-Pradhan. In this way the body of representatives is made from top to bottom. This is more or less influenced by all the central thrusts of the foregoing discussions duly based on data from primary as well as secondary sources. Now, the present Chapter will deal broadly with political behaviour of the Muslims vis-a-vis Hindu political system in Sahabanchak and present a picture of the effects and influences of all the contributing factors, such as economic, educational, socio-religious, communal and else. Since all those factors and aspects do focus on a single phenomenon- i.e. political behaviour, it is,

therefore, necessary to have an understanding about what politics is and how men's political behaviour is moulded.

However, Crick³ defines politics ... 'as the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and survival of the whole community. And, to complete a formal definition, a political system is that type of government where politics proves successful in ensuring reasonable stability and order'. Duly considering this definition to be a reasonable one in a broader context, we shall now place it for its validity in the grass roots of Sahabanchak politics - so far as the Muslims are concerned.

Muslims' Political Participation : Participation by the Muslims of Sahabanchak in political processes of the grass roots mainly comprises the areas of economic and social phenomena and issues, rather than the national political mainstream. Still it can not be denied that their participation in State or national political processes becomes much inevitable caused by certain economic and social issues that stand as a major threat to religious or cultural life of people. For this reason or the other people of Sahabanchak voted en block/they^{for} lies against the Congress (I) to teach it a lesson for its oppressive policy of family Planning and else. Barring such occasional issues, they are hardly concerned with what does or does not go on in the parley of parliament or at the Assembly. But their participation in

grass root-politics i.e. Panchayat corresponds exactly to their standing an agricultural life in a village community, or more importance springs out from Panchayat processes than from their principal occupations, such as agriculture and employment or trading and retailing. Panchayat is such an avenue of satisfying their all possible needs that once at this stage, they forget about all other areas of life, such as educational attainments, social prestige and dignity, kinship ties, personal or political ideals and mottoes etc. Even frictions between members of joint family come to sight.

I was lucky enough to observe the last election situations (obviously Panchayat elections) including the methods and modes of campaigning, and canvassing slogan shouting, and the instrument of conciliating the voters. Conciliation of the voters is as a primary method/^{is} almost affirmed on money on the bargain basis and not at all, with the help of mere political ideology of the party. Therefore, no canvassers out of pocket approach the voter for saying, "our party is the best one to protect your interest, rather than they near them for asking" how much do you need at best." Then the voter asks for an inflated amount which may be beyond the candidates pocket or will, then a bargain is set on some other grounds, like similar typed occupation, most hearing, neighbourhood identical age or that of his father, previous cordial terms, etc. between the candidate and the voter. Then it is somehow settled. Then another party workers come to him, and assure him of a larger amount, and once again he is

convinced, and swears of his and his family votes. Thus there takes place a process of deception. There have been noted a number of cases of deception by the voter. The voter strictly follows his own personal ideals quite unknown to other and stick to his own choice and vote accordingly. Even then, almost 80 per cent votes were polled in Sahabanchek on monetary basis in the last elections.

The next method of capturing vote banks is religion. Religion as an important instrument to catch votes gained immense value. The issues of Muslim Personal Law, Uniform Civil code, Shahbano case, communal riots, Ramjansambhoomi-Babri Masjid tussle, etc. made the Muslim Community fearing and concerned. Specially, the biased role of the prejudiced political leaders, placed the Muslims in a state of abiding despair and agony. This state, however, created a sense of adherence to Islam like a heart for a heartless⁴ which they use to apply in almost all walks of life. And consequently, they put before the votebanks, 'you see, while our religion is in danger in the hands of Kafeers, you are sticking to an ideology of the Kafeers! You must not relegate it to Your own indifference and ignorance. You see what are happening every now and then at every part of the country, even on the vicinity of our village-RSS men are being now the virtual residents of the villages. Once they (Hindus) win elections, they must try to evacuate Muslims from India. What happened to the thousands of Muslims while going to offer their namaaz at

the Katre masjid ? If they dare to blockade the way of tazia procession, how can you be sure that they won't prevent you from the religious use of loud speaker in azaan (summons to faithfuls for gathering at mosque for offering prayer). Such became the major political warcries rather than 'inquillab zindabad' or 'bande mataram' ; and also become effective to convincing about five/six percent of the Muslim population.

The anti-muslim attitudes of the political leaders, like Rajib Gandhi , A.B. Bajpayee, L.K. Advani, on the one hand, and the growing trends of adherence of the Left Front leaders, like Jyoti Basu, Kamal Basu, E.M.S. Namboodripad, Jatin Chakraborty etc. to Hindu fundamentalism, all gradually gave rise to a sense of separatism in the Muslim minds . Therefore, whether they believe in Left or in Right type politics they now firmly believe that they should have a soft corner for those who are trying for a political case against communal hazards from the RSS or Vishwa Hindu Parishad brandishing pears, axes and other sharp weapons at all its nearby training camps while marching about and shouting antinational slogans. As a result of such riotous attitudes of the RSS, Muslims naturally raise voice against its political patronage that arouses reaction from even frontline political leaders. Namboodripad, for instance, even wrote in 'People's Democracy' dated 14 July, 1985, "Yellow and red bearing RSS and C.P. I.(M) have been designated by the Muslims as

'communal fascists'.⁵ This type of reaction by Hindu leaders of the ruling Communist Party naturally makes a sense of expectation in the Muslim minds from other communist leaders also. At this state of help-need, they do not care much about who of the prominent communist or Congress (I) leaders visit Tirupati temple and Ram Krishna Missions and else, and how often they take blood-mark on their foreheads. Even they do not bother whether Jyoti Basu handed over a sum of 11 Lakh rupees to the Bharat Sevasharam Sangha for erection of hostel building to be meant for the Bengali students studying in New Delhi⁶, or he surrendered the relief funds to the Ram Krishna Mission for the allocation to the influx of refugee of Alipur Duer from Assam in 1983.⁷ They must not question, if ^aminister like Jatin Chakroborty, a staunch communist, says, that the left front will always cooperate with the Ramkrishna Mission, and allows it five lakh rupees for building up a guest house by the side of Srims Sarada Devi's temple at Jayrambati.⁸ But they must not expect the left front headed by Jyoti Basu, to make any even most sacred alliance with a reactionary party, like Bharatiya Janata Party, whose most prominent leaders, like AB Bajpayee, L.K. Advani and else, have been members of the RSS.⁹ Further, a Muslim can not agree with the Anand Math, a novel by Bankim Chatterjee which holds a Muslim, Raza Khan, responsible for the out break of famine in Bengal in 1176 (according to Bengali calender). One must not support such a unilaterally prejudiced

view, Whereas the C.P.I.(M) has adopted a huge plan and programme to tackle Muslim Communal politics.¹⁰ No nationalist can admit, if a prominent communist like Mayor Kamal Basu remarks "The thought and idealism of Vivekananda should be evoked in the youth of today. That the despair and frustration appeared in the present society does badly need vivekananda's thought,"¹¹ Since Vivekananda was a mere, Hindu revivalist who never uttered the word 'Muslim' as a target of his welfare scheme in spite of the fact he was born in the numerically Muslim dominated Bengal where Muslim condition was even worse than that of the Hindu. Therefore, the name of Vivekananda is never acceptable to muslims for his thoughts.

Rather, the Muslims, lying in the backward state on all counts, look upon their representatives, both Hindus and Muslims to realise the dreams that they were asked to cherish. But when they find everything to be unheeded and get their existence even being endangered by the patronised body of reactionary forces, they seek no harm to be sheltered under a religious banner of Islam. Thus, the value of integration and communal harmony is being shattered by the use of various instruments, communal politics being one of them.

Leadership Pattern in Sahabanchak :

While all the above phenomena have been instrumental of the political processes and are able to turn all types of ideology brought about by educational or economic attainments or ascription of the political organs, like; political literature, political parties or else upside down, the ruralites are in tragic

from sufferings / the total lack of potential leadership. The leadership that the community badly needs for laying its those hopes and aspirations which they are always promised about by the contesting political parties, does really matter in the case of overall development of the community. What is operative with role-play of leaders is just what is ever avoided and disliked by the Muslims. Such a leadership that ever arises in the political scene thoroughly corresponds to Mansoor Habibullah, Law & Justice minister, who says in sorrow, "To all intents and purposes, we could not make use of that instruction and that 'mantra' (saying that effects as if by magic) of the Swamiji (Vivekananda) even today."¹²

Such an attitude of a Muslim minister perpetrated upon the Muslim minds and proves no less excruciating than the fact narrated by Partap C. Aggarwal¹³ on a caste-feud. To quote him, "The popular discontent of the Harijans is that the Harijan political leaders are not of much help in the event of crisis - caste-feuds. They complain that their leaders usually take advantage of their caste loyalties at the election times and do disappear from the scene until the next election comes....great help from political quarters was needed badly. There was a Harijan M.P. who stunted help by hiding himself from behind the herbs because he could not ignore mass political support to be further needed in the forth coming elections. Fact therefore occurs that votes become more important to these leaders than the cause of their own caste fellows. This proves that political representation has limited value for the Harijan people, since the Harijan leaders become less useful once they become elected

whoever the leader—even Babu Jagdhan Ram or even Rameshwaram”.

In the case of Muslims in West Bengal in general and Muslims in sahebanchak in particular, such a value of political representation is almost zero. When Muslims are being brutally killed throughout the country and in West Bengal, the political leaders in general, and Muslim leaders, ^{like} Hashim Abdul Haleem Mansoor Habibullah Kalimuddin Shams, Abdul Bari, Saifuddin Chaudhury, Mohammed Amin and other on the Left wing, and on the Right wing, Rafique Alam, Tariq Anwar, Zafer Sherif A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chaudhury, Z.R. Ansari, Mohsina Qidwai, Abdul Gafur Khurshed Alam Khan, Ghulam Nabi Azad and others are busy in coaxing thierchief whips. These leaders formed one of the types in the leadership pattern in the grass root-level political field. Their appearance takes place in some locality only when they themselves are, in crises in shortage and need of votes. or unavoidably attending some marriage party.

The second type of leadership comprises grass-root level village folk who use to convey political message of the Local Committee leaders, such as Secretary of this committee and some other prominent figures of the committee. Common masses gain access to the committee or its prominent members virtually through this type of leaders. Before the masses are taken, or introduced to the committee, they are supposed to discuss their problems with this type of leaders who form a Branch Committee

The importance of the Branch members is holding accountability at both the levels- Local Committee and village panchayat. If a villager tries to discuss his matter directly with the Local Committee or the Zila Committee, this case is outright referred back to the Branch Committee. Therefore, it is necessary for everyone trying for political help to make and maintain good terms with the Branch Committee on the whole. But this system does not thoroughly suit to the whole population, and is considered to be based on bureaucratic and bourgeois ideology. Many of my informants criticised this system saying "It fully signifies that one who needs help is almost compelled to remain at the back and call of every member of the Branch Committee". Since this fact prevails in the system, then it is not less by any standard than a mere prevalence of 'personal loyalty' and personality cult which ultimately will lead people to abought, "Jyoti Basu is West Bengal, West Bengal is Jyoti Basu to coincide with D.K. Barua's flattering homage to Indira Gandhi, 'Indira is Indira, Indira is India.'¹⁴

The third type is composed of a few economically and socially influential villagers. Their political affiliation is not to be considered but their being of 'barolok' in certain villages carries weight in a limited area of political activity. But this fact shall not correspond to the findings by Yogendra Singh,¹⁵ "...upper ...classes (ex-landlords and money lenders) continue to hold powers in villages." What this type of

leaders can hardly do is to command a little respect of the villagers and the political leaders. Their appearances in return to the political leaders who still fail to discard or overlook their presence and prestige in the villages and among the votebanks, can fetch a political assistance to the villagers. Only to this extent, they help people and maintain their being 'barolok'. This type is increasingly losing its importance and utility among the people, especially in need of political support or solution to certain problems. Moreover, they also look askance at the limited capacity to influence some party commenting, 'How can he be a barolok', he can not get this simple work done! Thus such baroloks are, at present, misfitting the age of political modernism a hectic process fraught with risks and challenges. In this connection, Yogendra Singh writes¹⁶, "Each people face the challenges of modernity in accordance with their history, tradition and the initial conditions of their society as the process begins".

The fourth and final type of leadership that comprises the ulema and pious Muslims is wholly based on certain biased political literature and communal or religious mouthpieces. That the Muslim society is traditionally said to be mobilised and regulated by the orthodox mullahs is a growing imposition of blame on the Muslims. To it it can be said with precision that Muslim's dependency on the ulema in every respect, especially with regard to political decision making has been a long past, and is at present a mere paradox so far as Sahabanchak is

concerned. Rather it can be held that the Muslims feel the existence and importance and utility of those mullahs useful only when they themselves fail to observe certain religious rites and ritual like, marriage, burial, child-birth ceremony, and so on. On all other occasions, the mullahs are overlooked as unwanted, and are thoroughly ridiculed by Hindu and Muslims, both on their wearing beard and cap, getting fed and lodged by some village houses, mistakes in speaking Bengali language and so on.

In fact, the mullahs in Sahabanchak community is always steered clear of in dislike, whereas a popular feeling about a type of leadership said to be provided to the community is widespread throughout the country. In this regard, we shall quote Arghar Khan ¹⁷ who writes, "In the modern times the opportunistic Ulama of the Middle Age, have been replaced by a class of so-called religious scholars whose vision is unfortunately not broader than that of their predecessors. They too wear intellectual blinkers and either fail to see reason or are even willing to work for those whose aim is to exploit and suppress the people. This phenomenon prevails throughout the Muslim world, and whereas the West fight this battle and defeated obscurantists towards the end of the Middle Ages, the Muslim world has still to come to grips with this problem. This battle against ignorance and exploitation, which most of the Muslim World has yet to win is made complicated by the

exploitation of religion by vested interests : monarchs and mullahs, dictators, userpers, and opportunists ". The whole statement of Khen is never acceptable to a sensible person. There may be certain role-play of the mullahs as a foul one where religion as whole can not be held responsible for the exploitation by those he named, and that the entire finding of his is thoroughly inapplicable for the bias in it to many areas of Islamic organisation of social political and economic life, Sahabanchak being one of them.

Politics in Economic Life : The present day Panchayati Raj administration is based on political economy which, to an extent, is enriched by the local economies accrued from agriculture, business farms and employment. That "The material basis of society lies in forces of production and relations of production which gives rise to a superstructure of politics, legal frameworks, governance and ideology,"¹⁵ in fact is true to the Sahabanchak economic and political organisations of people. Most of the economic units in Sahabanchak are organised by keeping some bearings on political economy one way or the other. Its actual reasons are many ; we shall take up the major ones in the following manner.

Before we proceed with the reasons, we must put a factual clarity about the operation of the political economy.

Political economy that is raised by industrial functionaries operates here to be fed on one hand, and to feed respectively by the operative forces. Operative forces include Panchayat members, agriculturists, servicemen and businessmen. Remaining is the section of people lying outside the area of the above activities- neither fed nor feeding. Its reason is neatly associated with the present thrust of the study.

The first and foremost reason lies in the clandestine roles and functions of the Panchayat itself. The roles and functions of the Panchayat do not show any, relevance and consistency with the directive by the Governments. Huge funds and other relief are received by the Panchayat for the rural reconstruction which are all distributed among its members and their benefactors. Sometimes the members differ from each other over their shares and create fractions among themselves resulting into 'anastha' (No-confidence). I have reckoned as many as six cases of 'anastha' in and around Sahabanchak which were solely based on squabbles over 'bhag' (Share in public funds). By dint of bhag, many Pradhans ^{and a} number of Panchayat members constructed house buildings. Altogether, I found at least sixty (including Pradhans and members) who were elected in thatched houses, but are ^{now living} ~~living~~ in mansions. Thus all the public works like construction of roads, their repairing, constructing rest houses by the roads, etc. remain almost unheeded, but the funds for these works

are already appropriated by the Panchayat. Thus the body of Panchayat has been duly marked as 'the scramble-activists.

The second reason relates to the Government reliefs in the form of 'mini cest'- Sapling, vegetable seeds, clothes and dresses, grain, sugar, and other things. Panchayat members take extreme care to distribute such things in due consideration of recipients, family, Kinship, party religion and so on. This does not mean that they are not given to any body at all. Fulfilling all the above criteria a vast number of villagers get them, at the same time a larger number of them remain deprived of them. This section of privileged people are one of those raising party funds for local purposes in the party's economic crisis - election expenses etc. The need to meet the election expenses culminates in the distribution of 'patte' (lees out of acquired pieces of land). Keeping in view all these criteria, patte is given to who could assure their political loyalty (and also personal) to the party and the Panchayat leaders. This leads to wide discrimination. I met somewhere about 150 landless people given no patte simply because their political and even personal loyalty was not either assured, or was doubted. On the contrary many numbering not less than sixty landlords I observed holding patte in varied forms. Similarly, the process of enactment of tenancy rights of the bargaders follows the same criteria and similar consequences- discrimination, favouritism, factionalism, factions, 'anastha', bloody confrontation, law-suits etc. Moreover, here there is much prevailing

phenomenon of 'ghush'(bribe) with which not only are the land reforms officials associated, but also the party leaders of the first order. Party leaders are no less nimble in amassing money and to erect their own house buildings and business houses by dint of ghush and other appropriations, because they always held a share in public funds with their own Panchayats. This way the public motto and objective of rural reconstruction has been translated to vested interests in the hands of Panchayat institutions.

Another reason concerned with the area of the operation of the public economy relates to employment. Either favouritism or discrimination be in vogue in full swing or at a low ebb is again based on political or personal loyalties, Kinship , religion family and so on, on one hand, and huge amounts of bribes on the other. Neither the leaders , irrespective of Hindu, nor the individuals, regardless of Hindu, are away from this practice rather, being more and more nimble to the social and even religious deviation. But the political manipulation proves too inadequate to satisfy those fulfilling all the above criteria, but is able to conciliate a number of people. These people, in return, construct another base of political economy in the village areas in the form of not only bribe cash but also heavy donation of money in their party's economic requirements -elections etc. Therefore, it has been found that entire acquisition of employment, according to my informants, is made on political help and manipulation facilitated by bribes and all other criteria mentioned

above. But it does not preclude the phenomenon of competitive tests etc. as a basis for acquiring employment. What in fact happens is the outright political manipulation which is further based on economic social and political criteria.

Though very few in number, Muslim business firms that wield enough influence on political processes is the final base of political economy in rural Sahasrabhakt. In view of growing communal forces increasingly pervading throughout the village communities comprising a Hindu population, irrespective of numerically stronger, Muslim business houses are as dismayed and consternated as the common masses, and seek political protection and cooperation. Although they are not always able to get help in abundance, yet they firmly stick to certain parties in anticipation. Barring all sorts of discrimination that takes place in the hands of some communally embued political leaders, what they get on political grounds includes licence, permit, contract, share in decision making at the lower levels etc. besides a sure assurance of political ground against violent onslaught on life and properties by the communal forces. However, they meet all their political receipts with huge funds raised for meeting election and other expenses.

Politics and Education System :

It has been alluded in the preceding chapters that the increasing ^{RSS} growing has organisations and its opening new

training camps at various places around Sahabanchak already gave birth to a sense of insecurity in the Muslim community. This has now duly resulted in not only their adherence to religious banner but also in their keeping in touch with outside happenings which are brought to them by some magazines and Dailys, like the Radiance, Mizeen Kafela, Anand Bazar Patrika, Asjkal, Bartaman and so on in the face of the Hindus holding Statesman, Sunday, and some communal mouthpieces, like the organiser, Swastika etc. However, on the basis of the information provided by these magazines and Dailies, they firmly criticise Government policy, of education of avoiding Muslim's cultural and religious aspects while adopting Hindus, On this complaint against Government policy. I found most of my Muslim informants who argued that the Governments, State and central, which are manned by a Hindu majority, shall not want Muslim pupils to know their own culture, history and tradition, lest they overmatch Hindu culture on the 'Soil' of Hindu-^{and} stan. Because of this fact, syllabi/curricula have been duly communalised. They not only contain no cultural aspect of the Muslims but also left outside certain Muslim literary giants. Nazrul's poems have been accepted in a limited number of classes. They have hardly any reach at the graduation and Post graduation levels whereas poems composed by some raw hands, like Subhash Mukherjee, Ajit Dutta, Sukumar Roy, and many other lying side by side with Nazrul and Rabindranath.

Such views of the informants have been checked through study of current curricula and found almost true. The Education Board of West Bengal showed little leniency to Nazrul at the lower levels of education. But there has been found total absence of Muslim poets and literature from the curricula of all levels. This will not really create a wrong realisation in Muslim pupils that their community did not produce any other literary figure than Nazrul. I was struck by most of my Hindu informants regardless of illiterate who argued, who are among those literary figures, whose writings could be included in the curricula. This clearly indicates that the Hindu minds are not prepared that Muslim contribution to knowledge should also share Muslims and Hindus' educational attainments. While coming to my next inquiry about any real need of Urdu language in West Bengal, most negated its need while only a few agreed to accept any language which would ever be harmless but beneficial. One Hindu of those negating Urdu to be a branch of knowledge, comments, "Why another new language? Still our children fail to properly learn an alien language, English; if Urdu is thrown on them, they will certainly leave the school immediately; and what is the guarantee that after Urdu is introduced, the question of other language will not arise?" Thus cultural phenomenon becomes political and communal.

With regard to minority institution, there have been many discussions with the informants, and all their talks and arguments

focused on a single phenomenon - anti-muslim attitudes of the Governments. They proved this phenomenon with the help of certain evidence of the failure of their discussions with the political leaders for a Madrassa in, or on the outskirts of, Sahabanchak. In anticipation of political support, Sahabanchak people accompanied by people of other areas continued to allow support, vote and funds to the political parties, but their cherished desire could not fetch them success yet. Political leaders every time raised hopes but eventually tantalised and disheartened the community. It has been heard that a number of local Hindu led by some RSS leaders warned the Zilla committee of C.P.I.(M) against making recommendations for any minority school or Madrassa. They argued that the foundation of a minority institution will certainly lead to the foundation of another Muslim University in India and another disintegration of the country*. Even many Muslims believe that this warning reached the State Assembly, and received happy compliance. Thus, the process of Muslim education and learning is being hindered on communal grounds, directly or indirectly by the Government itself. Some even comment, "Madrassa or minority school, if you see that Muslim youngsters are crowding in masjid or in maktab for learning, then all the masjids and maktaba will be acquired by the communal governments. Simply to obstruct Muslims education and learning, Government does not let the Muslims pray in many early mosques situated at many places of India, So that

*It is believed that the Aligarh School led to the Present A.M.U. which was responsible for the demand of separate 'homeland' in Pakistan.

Muslims could not use them as modern education centres lest the educated ones should match Hindu predominance in every field of human activities. Much later I could collect the source of the information on which their view was based. An issue of *Calcutta*,¹³ December, 1985, holds that during the last autumn session" of the Parliament, it was agreed that there were nearly seven hundred mosques which were acquired and preserved by the Government. In view of their quality and importance as the historic places, the Archaeological Survey of India has undertaken these mosques. In West Bengal, there are fifteen mosques of this kind. In all the mosques general entry or entry for offering prayers, are strictly prohibited. Whereas, the Muslim Personal Law Application Act of 1937 should be applied to all those mosques (P.M.). However, the Muslims hold such attitudes of the Governments not only as a threat to Islam but also as a measure to demolish Muslim educational infrastructure.

Another point regarding Muslim education in the grip of political party is concerned with the new policy of the Government adopted in education system. The policy indicates that any school or madrasa will^{only} be established by the Government itself only when it feels strongly that it is really needed at a certain area, and that no personal or political efforts in the form of organisation shall be considered as a basis of need for the foundation of school or madrasa. This policy affects or benefits apparently equally all the religionists of West Bengal, but the

Muslims took it otherwise. They argue that it is a further blow to Muslim education. They feel that Hindu pupils, by dint of majority help, can easily further their studies, and that they will not be affected much if even there will be no scope for their organising a school in a locality, since all the schools are already crowded by the Hindu children. Therefore, it solely affects the Muslim community, since Muslims can not match the Hindus, nor can they find any other way to satisfy their desire for education and knowledge. One remarked in this regard that it was quite natural for the state government to make this policy in order to shatter education future of the Muslim generations, since it had already appropriated a good number of minority institutions, such as Haji Mohsin college of Hooghly, Shakhawat Memorial Girls School, Lady Brabourne Girls College, Islamic College at Calcutta etc. This efforts of the Governments C.P.I.(M) and Congress (I) were exhorted to appease and conciliate the majority community, on one hand, and leave behind the minority community in educational attainments, on the other.

As most of the Muslims believe, this is instance of C.P.I.(M)'s political and communal stance just in order to appease Hindu masses who still keep good terms with the Congress (I) Party which is alleged to be manned by many Hindu communalists and RSS' reactionary forces. Therefore, it was a necessary work for C.P.I.(M)' to coax Hindu pockets so that they adhere to C.P.I. (M) rather than the Congress. Its simple reason is that during the recent times, the RSS is laying more and more hopes with the Congress (I) party. It has withdrawn its support from BJP in the last general elections and given to

Rajib led Congress (I). Therefore, the Victory of Congress (I) in the last general elections was regarded in the Organiser as "the votes of Hindu Janata in favour of Hindu motto, and the party was also regarded as 'the party of the Hindus.'¹⁹ In order to capture more Hindu men, C.P.I. (M) is trying to apply every instrument to keep secure its 'gaddi' (Seats) at least in West Bengal, and therefore overlooks its original political base i.e. Muslim Community in all matters including education as an instance.

Another jolt which is felt in the world Muslim community springs from the state Governments indifference from, and suggestive attitudes,^{to} the sacrilege and blasphemy delineated in the 'Satanic verses' by Salman Rushdie. Salman Rushdie has now been known in the intellectual world for his what an eminent British literary critic, Auberon Waugh, wished him to be punished.²⁰ Whereas many westerners and Indians could not even be happy with the imposition of a ban on the book. Many Indians including state ministers and academicians and literatures have reacted so vehemently as Muslims could hardly find some sympathetic comfort from others. A prominent communist leader and one of the distinguished ministers, Buddhadev Bhattacharya became disgusted badly and gave a statement overboard in the newspapers against the prohibition of the 'Satanic Verses'. Associated with the 'Centre for Studies in Social Sciences', an academician, Mr. Partha Chatterjee wrote in Anand Baran Patrika, dated 27 October, 1988, '... these who have said by going through the book that blasphemy has been pictured in the

book against Hazrat Muhammad, are either liars (they have not read at all), or are scoundrel or extremely foolish.²¹

One Borgeprasanna Mukherjee wrote in 'Jugantar', a Bengal Daily, 'I firmly protest against the prohibition of the book, 'Satanic Verses' by Salman Rushdie. Being a secular democratic country Indian Government has poked its nose into the freedom of citizens' thinking. In the book, the wives of Muhammad have been shown as prostitutes-it is his exclusively self-owned angle of vision. In spite of the prevalence of Criminal and Civil Defamation Act in the Country, why did the Government prohibit the book per force? It is good to feel that Rushdie is an unprejudiced, and a believer in the appraisal, scientific vision. This statement has been widespread in most of Bengali magazines, journals and newspapers in the hands of giant editors, lawyers and academicians who have, not only, made fun of Islam and Muslims, but also, claimed the proclamation by the Government of the ban on the book be withdrawn. At this stage the Muslim community would like to trace out these men's attitudes towards some/like, 'Itihas' ^{other books} 'Itihas' by Ghulam Ahmad Murtaza written on Islamic culture, Muslim glories and anti-Muslim attitudes of the Government i.e. discrimination against Muslim in all social economic and political spheres of life, on one hand, and certain other book, like, 'Itihas Chaitanya'²⁴ by Anuly sen showing some Hindu dogas, prejudices and superstitions. On the other Both the books were banned, still these editors, leaders ministers academicians, intellectuals and

lawers kept mum.

Its single major reason is that though the days of reading of Bankim's Ananda Math, Burgheshchandini, Raj Singh or Aitaram based on fabrication have been almost past in the present decade, yet Muslim pupils are not much away from such writings containing cultural threats to the Muslims. An example will illustrate this point of Muslim fear of being culturally threatened besides in other fields. Sunil Ganguly²⁵ is known to the Bengali educated section for his various novels in Bengali. He wrote an article titled, 'Sabbhyatar Prakashapawte' 'Devadoot o Shaitaner Lawrai' in Anand Bazar Patrika's Pustak Samalochana'. He narrates, "The palphambar of Islam has been disparaged in the book, this was the complain', though the background of the story (Satanic verses) is of the recent time, and its protagonist is a young boy named Muhammad. Nonetheless a great religious leader's reverence and dignity can not be annihilated in a mere short story. That writing based on no facts and truth can be easily overlooked- the religious leaders themselves have given such advices. This argues that anything can be said or expressed in any form with a label of mere story', even if it goes to shatter and blemish, others religious and cultural sanctity. But fact lies that any thing under a veil of mere story or novel' can not be expressed so far as the following legal restrictions are concerned. The Law Commission Working Paper No.79, Offenses ^{against} / Religio and Public Worship,²⁶ States, "It would be intolerable if by allowing an author or publisher to plead the excellence of his

motives and the right to free speech he could evade the penalties of the law, even though his words were blasphemous in the sense of constituting an outrage upon the religious feelings of his fellowcitizens. This is no way forwarded for a successful plural society. In spite of such a unique provision in the law, if the ill-motivated writers, critics, lawyers, intellectuals, politicians and even academicians wish to wash out Islamic cultural heritage from the minds of the present Muslim generation and the posterities by this means, then it is natural for a community deeply engrossed and plunged in socio-economic backwardness to lag behind other communities, as a whole, in education obviously. And their obvious educational lag will certainly compel them to shun political participation in a proper manner on one hand, ^{and} to be ^erelin^equished from the national mainstream, on the whole. And only the future will speak of the Muslim learners at school, if, in fact, Ramayana and Mahabharata are introduced in the school curricula as proposed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)²⁷.

Politicisation : Politicisation as a matter of political mobilisation is not a new phenomenon in India, and in Sahabanchak. But peoples unawareness about its importance in political areas is quite a unique dimension to the Muslim population of Sahabanchak. We have already seen that issues and aspects of human life being politicised in the name of religion, education, employment, kinship and so on which have been also illuminated by the primary data and by some writings appearing in both secular as well as religious

montpieces and researchbased books. Now we shall deal with all the phenomenon by putting them in the wider whole of politicisation process taking place at the lower level and at the higher level, so that one should be clear about the actual Muslims' political status or position in decision making.

Once at the task of spotting status or position, one must come across a natural question : what role do the Muslims play in political decision making in order to achieve a political status. Many stereotypes will spring up from most of the quarters to answer this question . Muslims vote for their representatives; they mobilise the masses towards the cause of political, economic, educational religious and cultural sufferings, they try to influence the political decision-making by means of shouting slogans, pamphleteering, organising meetings , sending memoranda to political leaders and religious scholars, hosting seminars, symposia and conference and so on. Naturally, these answers must be followed by another question : what is the outcome of all these efforts ? The answer will be almost zero from all quarters, except a few . The answers will be the Muslims are given the right to equality; they are being extended political support in matters of acquiring employment or education ^{and a} few others. But these answers can be refuted by : No kind of the secular democratic Government ; it has tried to discharge its one of the most sacred duties by restoring certain

constitutional rights to some of the deserving citizens. Thank the Government that it did not, to that extent, allow discrimination against a few deserving citizens in procuring their Constitutional dues on the basis of their own capacities and capabilities. If the basis lies in capacities and ~~own~~ capabilities for procuring some apolitical dues such as employment, equal freedom of worship and education, economic or social enterprises then what is the political status of those who played a political role? Since an individual plays political role, his status will also be political not apolitical, because the status and role play are interdependent variables as having a feed-back relationship.²⁹ Further, if an individual performs the role of a groom or a bride, he or she will be a husband or a wife, rather than a politician. Therefore, one can not agree with the individual who claims his marriage to be the basis for his being a politician. Thus our present content shows the same controversy first of all, and clarity afterwards. However clarity lies in the fact that neither the people play any political role, nor they hold any political status. What role they do play is that they are getting exploited by some political parties, and ^{that} we find their role as a sheer target of political exploitation which yields an exploited state to them as status. There is no reason to think that an individual acquires certain status as a result of his political role play. What role he plays for such an apolitical status is yet to be traced to the evaluation in all his social, economic, educational and religio-cultural activities.

The activities which the people claim to be the political have been taken up as the bases of evaluation of their role and status. The enquiry based on not only relevant data but also an intensive checking and extensive cross-checking, however, confirms that the extent to which the rural folk carry out their activities remains much lower than the height the political decision-making requires people to reach. And therefore their activities in the name of political remain confined to their personal and strictly apolitical circumference.

In order to locate this phenomenon, we shall have to look into the factors which have prompted people to join a political party. In this connection it has been made possible to view that different people of Sahabanchak had peculiar reasons behind their joining a party. Its reasons being far from political are associated with their economic, familial, educational and religious-cultural spheres of life. But political ideologies on which political parties are theoretically said to be based carry almost no material value to people for their adherence.

Out of the total 464 Muslim informants, 240 individuals belong to the C.P.I.(M), 17 are affiliated to the Congress (I) and the remaining 49 people adhere to the newly growing Muslim League. To justify their party-affiliation, 169 out of 240 C.P.I. (M) adherents, 103 Congress (I) followers of 174 and 39 out of 49 Muslim League organisers held that Party's ideologies and efficacies were the sole reason for their joining the parties. As for the remaining

74 C.P.I. (M) , 74 Congress (I) and 9 Muslim League followers described their personal local circumstances as the basis for their association with the parties. But during the course of thorough discussions with the farmer , it has come to light that there are still a large number of varied reasons and factors that have worked behind their accepting those ideologies and efficacies. When further efforts were made to go into the deep of the actual bases on which their so-called ideologies are standing, it could be evident that about cent per cent party-cadres have ~~be~~ built up their political ideologies out of the ruins of personal sufferings which are quite akin to the latter. Local personal issues, however , forced them all to take political help which could and /or could not be obtained .Such a failure or success in getting help, from political quarters is generally miscalculated by the masses in view of their role in elections, arranging or organising political meetings , shouting slogans and else. Since they get an employment, contract for construction, road-permit. or some wholesale agencies and so on the basis of political manipulation, political leaders, too clever to be expected, hold every means to thoroughly exploit them in the process of politicisation of issues that spring at their personal levels. This fact can be verified by some empirical examples.

One of my informants, about 57, trading in grains, ^{who} previously claimed political ideology to be the sole basis for his joining, he

the C.P.I.(M) by saying 'niteetabbalo' (The motto is good). Therefore he for a half an hour, went on explaining his economic sufferings caused by some congress (I) goondas, and his obtaining political help from a communist leader and concluded his justification, 'how can I agree that their party's motto is not good by far. His extent of thinking justifies a party's ideology by means of a single help obtained from a man holding political influence. If the man referred to himself as a non-political social worker , or a religious leader, then the helped person would certainly not hesitate to say that the social work-motto, or the religious motto is good by far, but politics is the worst. Therefore, a man is always mobilised on the basis of the colour of the helper or endangening quarters, but political ideology is in fact a far cry. This can also apply to other phenomena, such as religious groups, regional variations, bureaucratic organisations, age groups, sex variations, economic groups and many others. If a member from any of the groups extends help to an individual then gets praised to be associated with a good society. But if the same member somehow fails to give some help to another he must be taken for a man associated with an unsympathetic society. This can be illustrated by another example.

There was a vast population associated with the Congress (I) since the C.P.I.(M) came into power of the State for the first time in 1967. Because of its initial encounter with the

jotedars (landlords) who held khas land (vested land: extra amount to the ceiling), most of those who were dispossessed from their illegal holding joined the congress (then I.N.C.) simply because congress did not even try to evict the unlawful possessions. Solely for this reason congress was good and the C.P. I.(M) for this reason was bad and this feature of both the parties mattered much in capturing political support in the succeeding elections since 1957. However, this example also shows that an apolitical aspect embeds in man a motivation based on personal vengeance and away from political instinct or ideology. This sense of vengeance ultimately puts him in certain political party which, at once, promises to help him in retaliation against the other party. Such cases in Sahabanchak are readily available in all the agricultural communities of the State as found in Sahabanchak. But their issues may be different and varied.

Failure to seek an employment is one of the most important issues which entails people's affiliation to, or change of, a political party. Extremes of politicisation of religious belongingness, are much in fashion in the political recruitments. As many as ten cases of failure in securing a job on the basis of political handling have been recorded in Sahabanchak. Most of them argued that had there been no political involvement in that matter, their candidates and /or they would have succeeded,

and thus rationalise their joining their respective parties.

So is the case with politicisation of religious issues also. In this sphere, people are most sensitive and aware. Soon after the Shahbano-case judgement was declared, large numbers of Muslims joined the C.P.I.(M) in order to teach a lesson to the Congress (I). Along with other issues the Muslim personal Law, uniform Civil Code, Babri Masjid etc. thus, not only had the Congress (I) candidate from the constituency (to which Sahabanchak is attached) defeated ^{by} C.P.I. (M), but also had C.P.I. (M) ripened its political base in the Muslim community of Sahabanchak. Thus it still stood as guarantee to this party till the last elections. At present, C.P.I. (M) is losing its popularity among the Muslims for the reason that Congress (I) or other party improved its political ideology and schemes favouring them. On the other hand, Muslims hold that they are not protected. The wide-spread anti-Muslim activities and

organisations of the RSS alleged to be patronised by the communists of the first order and ^{their} indifference to the cause of Muslim sufferings, such as Retra masjid massacre, sticking to prohibition of a large number of mosques in the state, communalisation of personal issues by ^{their} local leaders, scornful attitudes towards the demand of Aleya Madressa ²⁹ and so on are the examples of the Govts' Carelessness about the Muslim Community.

There may be many other examples of politicisation of personal issues by the political leaders. People's voice

is considered by them to be purely political simply because of the involvement of political men in them. But this is a very wrong conception and perception of people about how the political men benefit by their raising voice against certain issues. Here we are required to present some concrete examples of politicisation by some C.P.I.(M.) and Congress (I) political leaders of some abstract beliefs of the masses of Sahabanchak.

There was a candidate who is still well-known for his immense patience and patient determination. He used to be a firm contestant in South Kallachak Assembly Constituency (to which Sahabanchak Panchayat is attached) and used to be defeated by his different rival candidates since the early 1950s. Last of all he could win the election as a Left supported candidate in 1982. This was his last election as he died of massive cancer after a few months of his final victory of life. A by election was held soon, and the Left Front chose the dead M.L.A.'s wife for the contest. Now the Party's version was changed from political ideology into candidates Shock-mourning on the recent death. This issue was so strong and important for the party to capture sympathy-votes, as the election-campaigning processions headed by the widow of the dead M.L.A. even sometimes forgot to shout 'Inquilab Zindabad'. Even then the widow had to lose because of another sort of politicisation by a gaddi-starving figure of the C.P.I.(M) itself.

This starving figure won a Lok Sabha seat in 1977, but lost it in 1982. Therefore, he was almost sure that he would never be chosen by the Party for contesting for the Lok Sabha seat in the next election but may be a candidate for some Assembly seat. But he became struk when the Party chose the dead M.L.A's widow as the candidate for the South Kaliachak Assembly seat for which he was cherishing his dreams. Now he was also enlisted among other compaigners for votes. He badly made use of this opportunity to come in contact with the masses. Then in exchange for a number of promises then tactfully to mobilised the masses / in his favour not to vote for the present candidate. This proved much decisive to her loss to congress (I). Most useful means he applied to convince a decisive population was the allegation against the candidates husband. The dead M.L.A. was neverdelivn-ated that he had engineered communal riots in Malda in 1969 and caused mass-killings of the Muslims. Now, once again people began to recieve communal theats He thus started bowing seeds of communalism through all his own men in the minds of the Muslims. Who wished - defeated contesting widow/ on one hand, and wished once more to retaliate her husband's misdeeds by means of inflicting a defeat on her, on the other. Another instrument that he applied to conciliate the Hindu masses was that the dead husband of the widow remained associated with non-communist parties till his death. He even once deceived one of our present Front allies, i.e. R.S.P. He won the election under R.S.P's banner and joined the Congress in the Assembly in early 1960s, and started giving

contentible looks at the Leftists. Therefore, inspite of repeated offers to him for at least once contesting an election under C.P.I.(M)'s banner, he harshly refused all the times. When he eventually won an election as a candidate supported by the Left Front, he remained attached to his non-communist 'bhaktos' (admirers) of his earlier political life and kept aloof from the Party till his death. "Now what is the guarantee that his widow will not bypass us to benefit the non-communistmen?"

Thus, she fell the prey of underhand politicisation, and had to abdicate the seat to the starving politician. After winning the 1987 election, he also started bypassing all those who had sprayed the venom of communalism and engineered an anti-party activity against the dead M.L.A.'s widow. But some of his 'ownmen' were able to extract from him his fulfillment of promises about economic gains, like a white-collar job etc. Those who could not get their dues are still after him. This way the masses are being as instruments and apparatus in the hands of a power-starving minority. Thus, peoples role is not at all a political role, but an economic or a mere personal one which the politicians misuse for their own political advance and uplift. This will be further obvious in the following case of politicisation.

In view of failure to become minister in the State Assembly a Congress (I) M.L.A. decided to join the Left Front on the eve of 1977 State elections. After a little

discussion with the C.P.I.(M)'s District Committee, he assured himself of being the Left Front Candidate from South Kalischak constituency and started his election publicity clandestinely throughout the constituency. All of his own men even some ordinary vote banks who became annoyed and disgusted with the Congress for its antipathy and indifference towards the M.L.A.'s fitness in holding a portfolio in the ministry began to spread this news among the peoples. They also tried to convince them of such a wise decision of the M.L.A. to join the Leftfront ally which promised to allow him a portfolio in the State ministry. When this clandestine process was almost over, Left Front alliance could not be made with the Janata Party unfortunately, and the Congress M.L.A. could not be given election ticket to contest. Now the only way left to the M.L.A. was to pacify the masses through his own men', so that they would respond in the same manner as they did in the earlier elections and won him the seat of South Kalischak. All this again had to be done by them for obtaining some petty benefits, from the politician.

On the basis of the above processes of politicisation, it is clear that the political value of Gandhism or Marxism is a mere hoax to not only the masses, but also to the power-starving politicians. Therefore, the politicians leave no stone unturned to use and misuse their popularity and influence to make their own political career. At the same time, the masses are not hesitant to pull their weight to politically help the leaders for some personal gains. Therefore, neither the masses hold

any political role, nor they expect any political status. Thus, in stead, they would play some political role, they themselves are played on by the political men to their heart's content like 'the pawns on of the Chess-board,' Now the concept of influencing the political processes or decision-makings through the masses or their representatives is a cry in the wilderness. But their role and status can be best evaluated with the help of a comparison with the organisation and achievements of an interest group. As far as Sahabanchak and its population are concerned, mass-role is not at all higher than a role played by an 'interest-group' and mass status is even inferior to the attainments of the 'interest-group' because the interest group is not as throughly overlooked as the masses are.

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CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION

On the basis of thorough observation of the field of study, Sahabanchak, it has been found that its entire population's political behaviour is not confined to the political circumference beset with voting, canvassing, shouting slogans and war cries, organising political meetings etc. But political behaviour is duly influenced by a number of other social aspects, such ^{as} economy, education, religion, kinship etc. It is striking enough to note that all these aspects (economy, education, religion and kinship) are having immense bearings on every other aspect. For example, when there is an economic organisation, it involves religion, kinship, politics, etc.; similarly, in educational organisation, there is involvement of economy, politics, religion, kinship etc. In order to make obvious this phenomenon, we are required to summarise our investigation in following manners.

1. Economy : People's economy in Sahabanchak comprises agriculture, animal husbandry employment, business farms, agricultural labour, bidi-making and trading. Of them agriculture occupies an important place. Though agriculture is at present dwindling for labour crisis, most of the households of Sahabanchak are living on agricultural economy one way or the other. For this reason

landholding works as a status symbol and brings social status to the holders. Therefore, though land- produce and returns are not satisfactory people in general are very keen to hold land. This aspect gathered no less importance among the landless villagers. In order to hold a piece of land, they are not only engaged in share-cropping but also in political affairs. Their participation aims at getting (less from Govt.) which is distributed by political hands on the basis of political affiliation, religious identity, kinship ties etc. In this way, deserving villages are deprived of, while others on higher economic ladder are amply benefitted with, piece of land. This discriminatory attitudes of the politicians produce immense disappointment that ultimately leads to desertion of one political party and affiliation to another.

Another area of agricultural politics activities is related to share cropping on tenancy basis or on tenants at will basis. Most of the share cropped land on tenancy basis was earlier on tenants at will basis. The sharecroppers usually took advantage of the advent of C.P.I.(M) Government in the State with its new scheme of land reforms, and grabbed most of the share cropped land amounts. This phenomenon generated severe social tension and bad terms and hostility with their ultimate result in law suit, bloody confrontation, and loss of human lives and money. Again political parties are involved to adjudge the tussle and try to favour one on the grounds of one's political religious identity and kinship ties etc. This phenomenon sometimes

is related to acquisition of land by dispossessing the jotedars. This strategy of the Government produced tension between Hindus and Muslims and between Muslims and Muslims, because some of land the so-called landless folk acquired does not fall into the category of 'Khas land'. Therefore, here also, repetition of bloody confrontation, murders and law suits does entail, and parties favour those having fulfilled all their liking criteria.

Employment: Employment is another most important area of economic activities carried out by Sahabanchak people. Employment is important to people for major three reasons. It brings social status, it guarantees ^{an} abiding earning and the third is made up of the preceding two aspects that place an individual to make or forge kinship in a family or pedigree holding higher socio-economic status.

Employment, is perceived in Sahabanchak as an area of political manipulation because most of the appointments are made by this means. Therefore, political leaders are cared enough not only for political and social reasons but also very much for a job. This is the only prevalent screening as considered by Sahabanchak people in seeking an employment. Therefore job-seekers are crazily militant in political activities to coax the upper hands of political parties, and leave out nothing to obey ordained by them. But the policy of appointment is again based on political affiliation, religious identify, social status, and kinship ties.

Here also there springs up discontent and resentment that leads to desertion ^{of} one party and affiliation to another party. But those who are assured a job in exchange for a bribe ^{are} even ready to procure the amount from sale of a piece of land. Since almost all the appointments are made on such inexorable criteria, number of employees is quite insignificant ^{in Sahabanchak} and thus the value of democratic politics is also low in the area.

Business Firms : Business firms are another important area of the Muslims' economic organisation. It is also very important to political parties because they get support in the form of funds, votes and cooperation from the little higher level of the village strata. Therefore, the farmowners also share the low level political positions at the village and market levels, on the one hand, and security ^{of} life and property from political quarters against the rowdy communal forces being trained by RSS at several training camps nearby.

By means of political security and for other reasons relating to same religious belongingness, Muslims of Sahabanchak hold a sound numerical status at the Balshnabnager market. This became an eyesore of the local Hindu population which now tries to evict the Muslims from Hindu owned buildings. On the other hand, some Hindus recently grabbed two pieces of market yard on the basis of their political influence and communal dominance. This produced much tension in the Market samitee, which failed to restore the

pieces to the market because of the fact that this tension already resulted into a communal organisation and mobilisation among reactionary forces. This has also taken a coverage in the slogan-selection at the nearby RSS training camps.

Apart from this a number of personal conflict between Hindus and Muslims also took communal hue at those training centres, and Muslims wished political hands to close the chapter. But the political men are seen and reported to be passive apparently, but sympathetic towards the Hindu folk.

Animal Husbandry : Though the value of animals is worth keeping, yet owing to varied reasons, animal husbandry did not flourish to that extent in Sahabanchak. Animal husbandry costs too much to the agricultural households to guard them against dark-night theft. Another reason that includes huge exodus of animals from India to Bangladesh obviously gives rise to price hikes of domestic cattle and causes failure to raise ^{through} large number. Another important reason is communally based. RSS men considered Muslims' cattle-raising as an arrangement for food, and therefore they emit terrific threats to the Muslim community in training camps slogans against cow-slaughter. For all these reasons Muslims usually maintain the size of cattle essentially needed in agriculture.

Bidi-making : Bidi-making in Sahabanchak sustains the second largest employment potential, agriculture being the first. In most of the households, there are large numbers of bidi-makers.

Its flourishing condition includes a single most important factor : it requires no hard labour, but pays more than agricultural work does. Labour engagement in bidi industries caused languishing situation in agricultural labour force. In fine, all these factors, more or less, contribute to mould the political behaviour of the Muslims of Sahabanchak.

Education: The utility and importance of education has been emphasised in various perspectives by different scholars and thinkers. But the fact lies that the population of Sahabanchak is deeply engrossed in illiteracy and ignorance for some strong reasons. Some of these reasons are duly agreeable with those provided by some of the scholars, but majority of the reasons are differing because of the extreme peculiarity lying in Sahabanchak. The first peculiarity lies in the fact that the scope of education or the utility of education has been confined by Sahabanchak people to the acquisition of employment because lack of education does not deter them to carry out other activities. These activities include political participation, business organisation, bidi-making, Socio-cultural activities, like marriage and kinship, religious activities, settling familial and offinal disputes and property disputes, lack of coordination and consistency between every two consecutive courses taught in school and college, introduction and teaching of some literature containing anti-Muslim aspects. Apart from this, some prominent writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Bhudeb Mukherjee, Sunitee Devi Manilal Jangeoly, Ramesh Chandra Dutta and Kali Krishna Lahiri have threatened Islamic culture and tradition by their

writings which are respectively Durgeshnandini , Raj Singh, Anand Math and Sitaran ; Angooriyo Dinimoy ; The Beautiful Princess, Bharater Bidooahi ; Madhabi Kankan; and Raushan-ara . Though some pieces of current literature tried to refute the central message of those books, yet there is strong feeling in muslim minds of threat to culture and religion, because the youngsters will be, no sooner or latter, embloed the message of those books. Another most important reason lying in Sahabanchak is the difficulty in securing admission in school, college and University caused by a number of reasons. The first reason is the lack of sufficient institutions around. The existing one fail to accommodate all the admission seekers most of whom are Muslim. The second reason is the new policy of Government which debars a plain graduate (without honours) to enter the post graduation level unless he/she secures special honours. This also debars majority of the Muslim graduates, from persuing master's degree course. It includes another number of reasons. First of all, the time a special honours course takes is quite more than one can afford. The second reason is related to financial constraints. The third one is a crucial one : special honours graduate is always evaluated scornfully, and is therefore differentiated from those who hold regular honours degree. The final important reason is the communalisation and politicisation of admission. On the grounds^{of} their religious identity and political affiliation of their parents, Muslim candidates are discriminated against.

Apart from them, Muslims illiteracy and ignorance is further intensified by the high rate of women's illiteracy in Sahasrabudh. About half of the entire population being women certainly decreases about fifty percent of the total literacy of the whole community. Women illiteracy also affects otherwise. The family with illiterate mother is unable to properly socialise its members. Therefore, most of the drop-out and non-attendance cases appear in such families in which mothers are illiterate.

Another thing which seems to enlarge the size of backward state of Muslim community is the absence of minority institutions in and around Sahasrabudh. People's expectations about minority school or madrasa are being thoroughly thwarted by the Government accompanied by the communal forces. Therefore they hold and demonstrate their growing complaint which is also enriched by the information about the historic conversion of certain minority institutions into the secular ones, like, Lady Darnley Girls' College, Sakinagar Memorial Girls' School, Islamic College etc.

Religion : Some scholars provided with theoretical framework of Islam containing a number of basic principles according to which every faithful is ordained by God to lead his religious life. Without strictly following those basic principles, a Muslim will fail to remain a Muslim and will be considered a deviant. But their religious activities do not correspond to those basic principles to any sound extent, though most of them believe that

no sinner shall be exempted from God's whips'. Many believe that one's suffering and privation is because of the difference between his beliefs and deeds. What most of the Muslims do or perform in the name of religion is not in accordance with what Islamic Law says and ordains. Therefore, there have been found certain obvious performances of Muslims in violation of the Law. They include a number things, Gurbani (Sacrifice of cow, bafal, goat etc. in the name of God) being one of them. The flesh of the sacrificed object is wholly consumed in the sacrificing households, while its one-third share has to be distributed among the poor who fail to arrange their own. But most of the well off families present Eid gifts including an amount of flesh to their relatives, friends and others, irrespective of Muslim, in defiance of the Law of God.

Many of the Muslim families have been observed in Sahabanchak who fail to contribute fitrah to the baitul maal, but are quite able to sacrifice on the occasion of Gurbani Eid, because they are not forced by anybody to distribute the flesh as fitrah is asked to be paid on the Eid-ul-Fitr. Besides Fitrah, so is the case with zakat and ushr. Except a few handful of alm-giving almost no household pay zakat or ushr in accordance with Islamic Law.

Mutual terms and relations among the Sahabanchak people also violate the Law of God which have in general terms, picture

by Sherat Chandra Chatterjee by 'Share -ghare meamla, share-ghare dewala- toll' (every household is involved in litigation and in factionalism). Majority of the households are not on good terms with others over familial, affinal, landholding (including bargadari) or any socio-cultural matters.

Economic life of the Muslims shows a similar picture of transgression of Islamic law in most of the aspects, like, agriculture business employment, animal husbandry, bidi-making etc. Hence there are noted a number of cases of bloody confrontation because of the greed for landholding- between tenant and owner, and between sadhida (one who cultivates other's land for half of the produce) who seeks to claim to his tenancy rights and the owner, and also between affines. Acquisition of employment also shows the trend of deviation from Islamic principles. For the sake of an employment, many Muslim Youth indulge in hoodlunism, oppression of innocent opponent politicians, supply of young girls and wine bottles to the Chiefs, selection of racing sites. Similarly, business farms owned by Muslims also form an instance of deviation from Islamic law as it involves extreme jealousy among the Muslims themselves. Jealousy certainly gives rise to the number of existing Muslim farms, but militates against the principles of Islam.

As far the importance of education in Islam, it has given extreme priority W.C. Smith (1979) quoted some of the sayings of

the Prophet Muhammad : 'seek knowledge, even though it be in China,' 'the ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr,' 'an hour spent in study is more valuable than a year of prayer.' "In spite of this fact, Muslims are plunged in illiteracy and ignorance resulting into ill-mannered performance of religious duties, like namaz hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) etc. The manner, the most of the illiterate Muslims use in saying namaz is not in conformity with the Law of God. They do in the manner they feel most comfortable and unquestioned. Here education is holding top importance to teach people the actual way of performing namaz. Similar is the case with hajj. Most of the hajj-goers may have zeal for this duty well, but ends their task in sacrelence. They, while returning have, purchase a number of rare articles as gifts for their relatives and friends and carry them to home in secrecy in order to avoid paying duties. Many of them may also intend to hold an additional designation, 'Haji' or 'Haji Sahib', by means of performing the Hajj. even after returning from Mecca they are not much serious of their religious duties which more devolves on them as a result of their performing hajj, and are often seen away from keeping fast on pretext of dyspeptic troubles or other ailments and for some other causes.

There is a sound contribution of the so-called Ulama to the ignorance of people. Some interpret Quranic verses in

wrong way, while some try to justify their own money-making attitudes in the light of Quran. Such a role in misinterpretation of Quran and wrong fatwah have sound reflections in the treatment of women, and in the minds of the Islamicists.

. Quran never shows a Muslim woman to be inferior to man in any respect, but Muslim woman is not allowed by man an equal status. In view of their tragic social stratum, some remarked ^{that} woman has no soul, which was duly refuted by Sherat Chandra Chatterjee (1392) in the *Director Quran*. But fact lies that the status of woman in Quran is not that in practice. A process, however, is prevalent in making discrimination against woman's status. Woman is heavily loaded with familial burdens and responsibilities right from socialisation of children. She performs a mother-wife role which is also applied to the working women akin to Hindu women. They never know how to assert their importance in decision-making. But women, as a rule, remain unheeded, except in matters of child-bearing and child-rearing. But every woman does more work in a day than a man does. What a man does includes tilling land, harrowing and breaking the clods, reaping and harvesting crops, trading on door-to-door basis in grain, jute, cattle etc. But a woman does all those work possible for woman to do within the homestead. Their tasks include filling of trough in water, crumbling straw and grasses, kneading feed in the trough,

carrying cattle, collecting fuel for cooking and preparing food, cleaning and drying courthouses and so on among those inherent in male role besides those inherent in female role. They are only exempted from being forced into flesh-trade. Even then, the women are deprived of equal food habits. Males are indifferent towards females feeling over food, and thus it proves further their lower status in society and thus it leads to further violation of religious Law of God.

The Muslims of Sahabanchak were very happily interacting with their coreligionists till 1946, but their culture is further threatened by the rise and pace of the reactionary forces of the RSS. Incidence of communal riots at various places in India had already violated the entire circle shared by both the faithfuls in Sahabanchak, while the new rise of RSS brings immense fear in the minds of the Muslims, and wish the Government to protect their life and properties, but the Government is at present considered to be fanning the communal fuel instead of suppressing it. Even Hindu and Muslim unity started breaking, while the political leaders of highest ladder, like Rajib Gandhi, Jyoti Basu, B. B. Bhattacharya, Subhas Chandra Bose, K. M. Mukherjee, Jatin Dasgupta, and others are seeking to coax the communal forces of RSS and/or BJP. In view of C. P. I. (M) leaders' unreasonable attachment to the reactionary forces, L. K. Pandey remarked, C. P. I. (M) leaders are required to be restored secular-mindedness by replacing Hindu sentiment and affection. He added an example; a Parsi communist, Babur

in an area through local educated youth have been thoroughly frustrated. Muslims rather believe that this policy of the ruling party (JUI(Q)) is a communal stance in order to lessen the rate of education and the incentive for employment among the Muslims. Governments' indifference to rather some of the top leaders' distrust with the nation, Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses' is again felt badly in the Muslim Community. Many comments and criticisms arose as a result of this publication which again provided a cultural threat to the community because Hakim Chandra Chatterjee is believed to be succeeded to further vitiate the whole cultural object of religious materials. Now there is every probability for the young Muslim pupils to relocate their culture and religion through the study of such filthy writings.

All the details given above raise some natural questions. What political role do the Muslims play? What is their political status or position in the field of political decision-making? And, what is the outcome of their efforts? By giving precise and comprehensive looks at the length and breadth of their activities as claimed to be political, a single answer to all the above questions has been made that neither have the Muslims any political role to play nor do they possess any political status or position, since role and status are simultaneous. In other words, if one plays a real political role, one must get a political status.

But people in Sahabanchak play the so-called political role but yet a status which has no link with their role, at all. They vote for political parties, thought slogans, arrange political meetings, stick posters and banners etc. as their political roles in anticipation of employment, contracts, permits or any other economic gains which can not be associated with political status or position. What is this phenomenon then? Answer to this question is available in the politicisation of issues, -political and social.

This is related to people's joining a political party. Though most of the people claimed that party's political ideology attracted them towards the party, but through lengthy discussions with the villagers it has come to light that the cause of their liking a party's ideology lies at the root of their own economic, social but apolitical objects. While party men help in this connection, they cherish personal loyalties and thoroughly make use of them in the matters they wish. Thus, people are being exploited by the political men striving for power. On the one hand, they fail to extract any help from them in religious or cultural crisis like R&L threat, Katra Masjid massacre, communal riots or else, and they are led and played like the pawns on chess-board, in their political schemements at the cost of other leaders from the same party. Thus the process has washed out the

value of Marxism or Gandhism and quickens and revitalises the personal value of the political men hankering after power. As a result, people's wish to influence or assert their political importance which is inherent in their claimed political role is 'a cry in the wilderness. What activities they carry out somehow correspond to those of a certain 'interest group' which are not political but put pressure on politics, or even sometimes they are lower than or inferior to.